Missionary Life at Valle Crucis

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WILLIAM WEST SKILES

A SKETCH OF

MISSIONARY LIFE AT VALLE CRUCIS

IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

1842-1862

"The modest merit of this man is rare."—*Church Intelligencer*

EDITED BY

SUSAN FENIMORE COOPER

AUTHOR OF "RURAL HOURS," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

THIS brief record of a good man's life, as missionary, has been written in compliance with the expressed wish of that revered Father in God, Bishop Atkinson.

Materials for the volume have been most kindly provided by a number of prominent clergymen, contemporaries of the Rev. Mr. Skiles in the Diocese of North Carolina. Among these may be named the Rev. Dr. Watson, now Bishop Watson of East Carolina, the Rev. Dr. Jarvis Buxton, the Rev. Henry H. Prout, the Rev. Dr. George Wetmore, and the Rev. William Glennie French.

To Mr. George N. Evans, the zealous layman, the faithful friend and fellow-labourer of the Rev. Mr. Skiles, the editor is also largely indebted for many details regarding the daily life of the missionary, and the country over which he travelled.

July 15, 1889.

MEMOIR OF WILLIAM WEST SKILES,

Missionary in Western North Carolina.

I.

Some fifty years since, the valley of the Watauga, in North Carolina, was a secluded region, isolated and forgotten, a mountain wilderness, showing only here and there the first rude touches of civilization. The narrow winding trail or foot-path, the rough sled-road, often dangerous for wheels, here and there a log cabin, with a narrow, rough clearing about it, or at long intervals a rude saw-mill or grist-mill, with perchance a small, unpainted frame dwelling, or a blacksmith shop and a humble backwoods store, marking the beginning of a hamlet, such were the only traces of human habitation to be found on the banks of the stream. But the Highland valley was magnificent in natural beauty. It lay in the elevated country between the Blue Ridge and

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the Alleghanies, nearly three thousand feet above the sea, while grand old mountains of successive ranges, broken into a hundred peaks, rose to nearly double that height on either hand—many so near that their distinctive features could be clearly seen, while others were only dimly outlined in the distance. These mountain ranges were peculiarly interesting, differing in some particulars from those in other parts of the country. Their vegetation was singularly rich and varied.

About the year 1840, a gentleman from New York, after wandering in the low country of North Carolina, on a botanical excursion, determined to penetrate into the isolated region beyond the Blue Ridge, in quest of rare plants. After leaving the beautiful little village of Lenoir, the road at length followed the bank of the Yadkin, until it reached the Blowing Rock Gap, in a spur of the Blue Ridge. The Blowing Rock Mountain derived its name from a powerful wind rising with increasing force from the depths of a dark cañon a thousand feet below, and sweeping over a ledge of rock on the mountain side. The

rough track crossed this Blowing Rock at an elevation of two thousand feet above the valley below, winding over heights which were not precipitous, but steep, declivities. The head-springs of the Yadkin, always very cool and refreshing, were passed. The Yadkin, it will be remembered, is the main tributary of the Pedee, flowing into the Atlantic. The head-waters of the John's River, flowing into the Catawba, were also passed, only a quarter of a mile beyond. A little to the northward, on the western declivities of the Blue Ridge, lay the head-springs of the New River, flowing into the Great Kanawha, and thence through the Ohio and the Mississippi, into the Gulf of Mexico. The Blue Ridge is crossed by no stream. It is the dividing range in North Carolina.

Following the Blue Ridge for several miles farther, the track left the mountains where they trend westward and wound downward into the valley of the Watauga, amid an unceasing accompaniment of brooks and cascades. This wealth of clear, bright waters gave a peculiar character to the country; their

murmur was ever in the traveller's ear. And the profusion of magnificent flowers, large in size and brilliant in colouring, gave additional charm to the mountain path; the azaleas, pink, purple, and orange; the grand rhododendrons, rose and purple; the laurel, scarlet trumpet flowers, the large yellow honeysuckle, and many others were thronging the undergrowth, cheering the wanderer on the rude highland track. There was something of gloom in the picture, too; the height of the surrounding mountains, the depth of the valleys and gorges, the dense, darkly coloured forest, covering hill and dale with a sombre green drapery, broken only here and there by very small clearings—all these told of the wilderness. Leaving the open, breezy mountain-tops, the wanderer seemed plunging downward into a basin, dark, mysterious, and all but uncanny in its sombre aspect. The remarkable richness and beauty of the vegetation, however, when seen in detail, either on the mountain-side, or in the few cleared acres, relieved the mind from what there might be of gloom in the general aspect. After an abrupt

descent of 500 feet, the Watauga was reached at a point called Shull's Mill-pond, 2,917 feet above the sea, about five miles from its source. This wild stream flows from the western face of the Grandfather, the highest mountain of that group of the Blue Ridge, which reaches an elevation of 5,897 feet. The general direction of the stream is northward, the rude mountain road following its winding course; at one point the track was so narrow that it was dangerous for waggons to attempt passing each other, and this danger continued for a distance of a mile. The country was indeed too thoroughly wild, and too thinly peopled, to allow of the hope of a good road. Only occasionally the traveller passed a small, rude log cabin, with a scant strip of clearing about it.

It was in this wild, and yet luxuriant region, so full of interest to the botanist, that the traveller from New York wandered for a time, gathering treasures for his herbarium, and delighting in the grand beauty of the country. He also became interested in the families living in the rude cabins where he sought shelter.

He found them very poor, ignorant, but simple, honest, and kindly, though very quiet and undemonstrative in manner. They received him hospitably and gave him the best of their mountain fare. And they were anxious for instruction. On his return northward he met Bishop Ives, and spoke warmly of the gratification he had derived from his excursion on the Watauga, and dwelt earnestly on the religious privations of these mountaineers: "An interesting population in great spiritual destitution."

Bishop Ives was at that time the head of the Diocese of North Carolina, and entirely faithful to the doctrines of the Church which had consecrated him to that holy office. He was so much interested in the traveller's report that at his next Visitation of the Diocese he made his way across the Blue Ridge, and on the 20th of July, 1842, he held a service in the valley of the Watauga. In his report to the Convention of the Diocese he spoke particularly of the people:

"While my sympathies were deeply excited in view of their great spiritual destitution, my admiration was at the same

time awakened by the simplicity of their character, and the deep earnestness of their petition for instruction. I addressed a few of them on their wants, and promised to send them, the moment it should be in my power, a Missionary, who should teach them the rudiments of knowledge, and preach to them the Word of God."

A few months later, in December, 1842, the Rev. Henry H. Prout came to fulfil the Bishop's promise. His labours began at the "Lower Settlement," near the point where the Watauga flows into Tennessee. He travelled on horseback or on foot. The paths, or trails, through the grand old forest were often obstructed by fallen timber, over which horse and rider must needs climb as best they could. The streams must be forded. A bridge, even of the rudest kind, was an effort of civilization to be found only in the most favoured spots. The "Lower Settlement" was at that date a scattered hamlet of the rudest kind, but it became the centre of Missionary work. On Mr. Prout's arrival he gave notice that he would hold a service on the following Sunday. This announcement made, the next step—by no means an easy one—required the collecting of a congregation.

The nearest cabins were scattered about, within a distance of a dozen miles, along the banks of the streams, on the mountain sides, or in the deep forest glens. The first of these parochial visits was characteristic of many others. Following the bank of the stream, climbing over fallen timber, or creeping under the great, moss-covered mouldering trunks, the Mission ary came at last to a solitary cabin. It appeared desolate and deserted. At first he thought it uninhabited, but as he drew near he discovered a faint smoke rising from the low chimney, and perceived the smell of beef boiling. He knocked. The door opened, and a wild-looking woman appeared, amazed and bewildered by this civilized visiter. She gave him the usual backwoods salutation: "What mout yer name be?" "What mout be yer business?" He was invited in, however, and made welcome after a rude fashion. A small rough table stood on the earthen floor; opposite the great yawning stone chimney stood a bench against the wall; these, with the iron pot on the crane, were the chief furniture of this mountain cabin. The Missionary explained

his errand, which excited a sort of dull wonder. The Gospel message was respectfully received, however, and the good man passed on to another cabin, and by the like rough paths. Thus the week was spent, and the blessed Lord's Day came round. The service was held in a cabin at the "Lower Settlement." It was well attended. Men and women came straggling in, many on foot, some on horseback, the wife in sun-bonnet and straight, narrow gown, riding behind her husband. Here and there a woman was seen mounted on a steer, with a child or two in her arms, while the husband, walking beside them, goad in hand, guided the animal over the rough path. The women all wore sun-bonnets, or handkerchiefs tied over their heads. Some were bare-footed. There were many more feet than shoes in the congregation. The boys and girls, even when full grown, were often bare-footed. This was no doubt the first service of our Church held in that region. And it was declared to be the first religious service of any kind held in the valley of the Watauga for seven years. The simple

folk showed themselves interested and grateful. Regular services followed, and as a consequence of the naturally civilizing effect of a reverent and dignified Christian worship, the people began of their own accord to wash and mend their clothing more carefully, to aim at a more respectable appearance in public for themselves and their children. The cabin in which the services were held soon became too small. The school began. A school-house of logs, large enough for the Sunday services, was built. Little improvements appeared, and at the end of several months a visiter, who had known the hamlet earlier, cheered the Missionary's heart by declaring he could not have believed it possible that so great a change for the better could have taken place in so short a time. Those wild pupils became very dear to the servant of God. They tried very hard to learn their lessons well. Occasionally some of the parents would come in, and pore intently over the spelling book. All did their best. Every now and then the lessons ceased, and a simple Hymn was sung, in which all joined, feeling that it was a grand thing to sing the

Lord's Praise. The verse most frequently heard was the Doxology of the saintly Bishop Ken :

> " Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
> Praise Him all creatures here below ;
> Praise Him above, y' angelic host,
> Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

And where, among the English-speaking race, have not those holy words been devoutly sung? Is there one hour in the day when they do not flow from Christian lips, in one quarter of the world or another?

The results of these early labours in Ashe, now Watauga County, were reported by the missionary in 1843, as follows :

" Baptisms, 9 ; Confirmed, 1 ; Marriages, 3 ; Burials, 4.

" During the past year about fifty children have been instructed in the Catechism. Twenty-five prayer-books have been distributed. A Catechetical Library of 100 volumes, furnished by the Bishop, has been in general circulation.

" H. H. PROUT."

Among the Baptisms recorded in this report one had taken place in a log cabin, the only dwelling in a secluded valley remarkable for its wild beauty. The Missionary held a ser-

vice in the cabin, where a small congregation had collected. The valley, entirely shut in by forest-clad mountains, was watered by three small, limpid streams, two of them leaping down the hillsides in foaming cascades; the principal stream, formed by the junction, after a short course of about two miles, passing through a narrow gorge, threw itself into the Watauga. The waters rushing over the rocky bed of the stream, and the many lesser brooks leaping down the mountain side, filled the air with an unceasing murmur, now loud and full, then more gentle and subdued. It was this secluded valley which, from the cross-like form of the three streams at their junction, was now to receive the name of Valle Crucis. It will be remembered that there was formerly a valley and a religious house in England of the same name.

In the month of August, 1843, Bishop Ives visited this valley and confirmed one person. He became so much charmed with the country and so much interested in the people that he proposed making this ground the site of important Mission Work for the Diocese. En-

couraged by the sympathy of several prominent clergymen and laymen, he took the first steps towards organizing the Mission by purchasing a tract of land. The little valley itself contained 125 acres of level land, one-third of which was under cultivation. This was purchased for $1,500. Later additions adapted to grazing, or valuable for timber, amounted in all to 2,000 acres. The prices of the later purchases have not been ascertained. The Bishop proposed making this valley an important centre of work for the entire Diocese, to include a Missionary Station, a Training School for the Ministry, and a Classical and Agricultural School for boys. The latter school was designed to aid the foundation.

When first visited by the Bishop it was thoroughly solitary ground. As an Indian would have said, there was but "one smoke" in the valley. The log cabin of the mountain miller was the only human dwelling, a very rude little grist-mill and a small tannery the only other buildings. But a change was now at hand. In August, 1844, contracts were

made for clearing the land and putting up the necessary buildings, which included a saw-mill, a log kitchen, a dining-room of adobe, a dwelling-house of four rooms of hewn logs, and a frame building with boarded walls, 60 x 18, containing a school-room on the ground floor, beneath which a basement, walled and floored with brick, was afterwards excavated the whole length of the building, through a cut on the hillside, that was used for the chapel. The storey above the school-room served as a dormitory, with rooms for the teachers at each end. To these buildings others were soon added: a house of adobe 26 x 18, two storeys high, with a cellar below, a large frame barn, with brick basement for stables, a blacksmith's shop, and several log cabins for labourers. These were all scattered about in pleasing positions and near each other. A Bishop's house and a Chapel were also planned. Early in 1845 the school opened with thirty boys, the number increasing to fifty during the summer. The Rev. Mr. Thurston was, under the Bishop, head of the Mission and director of the school, in which

he was assisted by several well-educated young men, Candidates for the Ministry, of whom there were seven. The household affairs were managed by Mrs. Thurston and two other experienced ladies.

The Mission was expected to cover a circuit of thirty-five miles in the adjoining mountain region.

The first year of the school was far from satisfactory, owing to several causes. The buildings were not finished in time, and at the approach of cold weather the boys were not comfortably lodged. But a greater obstacle arose from the fact that a number of lads had been sent to Valle Crucis by their friends, as to a Reformatory. There were some excellent boys in the school. But the misconduct of others, who knew absolutely nothing of discipline and subordination, proved the source of very serious trouble. It became necessary to resort to expulsion, in some cases. The misconduct of those unruly ones had even a bad effect on the neighbouring Missions; the opponents of the Church were not slow to tell the Missionaries that this misconduct was the nat-

ural result of Church teaching! A number of the boys were recalled by their friends. The ladies lost courage, and withdrew one after another. And, at length, the Rev. Mr. Thurston died, after a short illness, of an inflammatory fever brought from the low country.

But improvement was at hand. The school opened anew under the charge of Mr. Jarvis Buxton, a Candidate for Holy Orders, with good results. The young theological students pursued their studies with courage and devotion. The Missionary work was carried on by the Rev. Mr. Prout, with diligent fidelity.

II.

At this period an experienced farmer, to take charge of the agricultural department, was required. To fill this position, a middle-aged man came to Valle Crucis from the low country of North Carolina.

William West Skiles was born October 12, 1807, at Hertford, Perquimons County, N. C. He attended as a child the common school of that neighbourhood, and it is said that his boyhood was highly honourable, earning at that early day an excellent reputation for honesty, industry, and a strong sense of duty. As a young man he was much esteemed and liked for kindly and attractive qualities. He looked forward to work as a mechanic, and for some years filled most worthily the position of overseer of extensive lumber-mills near Plymouth. Thence, in 1844, at the age of thirty-seven, he came to Valle Crucis, where his personal character soon made a strong impression on

all who knew him. Simple, earnest, and peculiarly kindly in countenance and manner, there was something winning about him which attracted a warm regard from his companions, while his uprightness, sound practical judgment, his skill and experience, soon placed him at the head of the working department. Gradually, as his efficiency and fidelity became more and more apparent, one duty after another was allotted to him, until the labours of head farmer, store-keeper, postmaster, treasurer, and general superintendent devolved upon him. The religious tone of the institution, devout and earnest, produced a deep impression on this practical business man. He had been in the family but a short time when he expressed to the clergyman in charge his desire to serve his Lord and Master more fully than he had yet done, by devoting his life to the sacred ministry. There was no difficulty in procuring the necessary testimonials in behalf of a man of his most worthy moral character, and he began almost immediately the necessary studies. The name of William W. Skiles appears as a Candidate for Deacon's

Orders in the Report of the Standing Committee of the Diocese for 1845. He was at that time about thirty-eight years old, according to a record found in an old book. He was thus one of the first to profit by the Canon of the General Convention, allowing the admission of Deacons without classical education. A plain English education was all he had received, and he made no attempt to acquire the ancient languages.

During the first two years of his life at Valle Crucis the time of William Skiles was divided between the daily work connected with his position as General Superintendent and his preparation for the sacred ministry. With teaching and Mission work he had, during those years, nothing to do. But every other department of the work at Valle Crucis was more or less closely under his supervision. Remarkable for discretion, practical, patient, and methodical, he would seem to have found time to attend to many varied duties at the right moment and in the right way. His personal character inspired entire confidence in his fidelity and uprightness, while the gen

ial kindliness of his nature soon added affectionate regard to the respect with which all looked up to him. By many years older than the young men connected with the Mission, he was constantly consulted by them on practical points, and his advice never failed to have great weight with his young associates. "We considered him as our Nestor," says one, now a prominent clergyman of the Church. His slightly stooping figure and partially bald head gave him the appearance of greater age than he could actually claim. He was generally believed to be nearly fifty when he came to Valle Crucis, but the date of his birth has been recently found in an old memorandum book, by Mr. George Evans, and that date is October 12, 1807.

He lived at that time in the upper room of the office, or library. In the long summer mornings, after his own private devotions, he was often afield before the sun rose, attending to some especial duty. Perchance he gave an eye to the hayfield or the crops, or he looked after the lumber at the saw-mill, or after the cattle, in which he felt an especial

interest. Bishop Ives had purchased in Pennsylvania valuable stock, which he sent to Valle Crucis at a great expense. This was, of course, under the care of Mr. Skiles. That portion of the valley selected for the Mission farm was level and easily cultivated, although the soil was not rich. The crops were wheat, and all the smaller grains, including buckwheat, with clover and grasses. Maize was an uncertain crop, although the small rare-ripe kind was usually planted. It was a very fine grazing country, and the herds of the Mission family fared well, not only in the meadows of the valley, but also in the natural pastures to be found in many places on the mountains, even to their very summits. None but hardy vegetables were cultivated in the gardens, as the summers were too short for the more tender kinds. But the hardy sorts were of remarkably good quality; the cabbages were very fine, so large and sound, and so choice in flavour; in fact, they were quite remarkable, and the Mission family would seem to have indulged in a certain pride in those magnificent vegetables, which might have sat for their portraits to

some Dutch artist. Peaches were raised in the valley, and the common cherry was abundant in the neighbourhood. The apples were remarkably fine, as they are said to be in all that mountain region. It was with something more than the feeling of a common farmer that William Skiles walked about the fields entrusted to his care; not only was he naturally desirous that the harvest of grain, fruit, and vegetables should turn out well, but the actual well-being of the Mission family, their daily bread, in fact, depended very much upon the yield of the farm.

As the sun appeared above the eastern hills a bugle was heard calling the family to early prayers. All turned their steps towards the brick basement Chapel, plain and unadorned, where the services were devoutly performed. It was usually, at that date, one of the Divinity students who officiated in the Chapel. Since the death of the Rev. Mr. Thurston there had been no rector at Valle Crucis. And there, among others, was William Skiles, sure to be in his place, on his knees, in the House of Prayer, whatever may have been the urgent

work on the farm. Among many youthful heads, more attractive, perchance, in form and feature, the half-bald head and plain face of the middle-aged yeoman commanded respect and sympathy from their expression of simple, earnest devotion and natural goodness, if we may use the words. In his countenance there was always the strength of good sense, blended with a glow of kindly feeling. The service over, prayer and praise devoutly offered, the family band of worshippers went down the slope of the hill to the long shed room in the rear of the log house, called the Bishop's House, where they breakfasted. The meals were always simple, chiefly from the produce of the farm, excepting when trout and venison were brought in.

After breakfast the time of the Steward was again given to the varied details of his business. Perchance a rustic customer appeared at the little store "to trade." Or a load of goods, brought with great toil over the mountain roads from Morganton or Lenoir, must needs be looked over. These goods, brought from the east side of the Blue Ridge, appeared

but seldom, however, and the amount was small; tea, coffee, sugar, mustard, pepper, salt, farm tools, nails, screws, etc.; a few packages of the more common medicines for the dispensary, boots and shoes, school-books, paper, pens, ink, with a very modest supply of general stationery; needles, pins, thread, tape, buttons, with perchance a few pieces of calico, flannels, and shirting, such were the usual contents of the invoice directed to William Skiles. Every primitive country "store" contains an odd medley, but the shelves at Valle Crucis, with their post-office pigeon-holes, their medical and literary corners, could show even a wider range than usual. But limited indeed was the space allotted to each department; the entire building was a mere box.

Occasionally there were sales of cattle or sheep to be made, or it might be produce or lumber. Here again was work for the steward. The perfect honesty, the open uprightness of his dealings with the country people on these occasions was frequently remarked, and soon obtained for him their unqualified confidence, their sincere respect.

All the funds of the institution passed through his trustworthy hands, as he was the General Treasurer also. Of course, close attention to the accounts occupied a portion of his time. But this duty was usually attended to in the afternoon or evening. Dinner took place at noon. In the afternoon, at five, there were evening prayers, from which the good yeoman student was never absent, unless from necessity.

In spite of his numerous secular occupations, the most important part of his duties, the preparation for the sacred ministry, was never neglected. It was in the library, or office, where he slept, that his studies were chiefly carried on during the evening hours, blended, we may be sure, with much earnest prayer. There was a regular course of lectures, also, for the divinity students, which he attended faithfully. He was appointed a warden of the parish of the Church of the Holy Cross soon after Mr. Thurston's death. The Report for 1846 was prepared by him:

"Communicants ten, four having been added during the year, while five have removed. Daily Morning Prayer has

been read in the Chapel, and constant instruction in the Bible and Catechism given to the youth connected with the establishment. The sudden death of the rector of the parish, the Rev. Mr. Thurston, whose place has not been supplied, has proved a drawback to its prosperity. We need a minister who can devote his whole time to our spiritual needs."

But although there was no regular rector, the religious services were carried on with fidelity. There was a short Chapel service at sunrise, another at noon, and also the regular Morning and Evening Prayers daily. These services were well attended. The Chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Prout, officiated three Sundays in the month in the basement Chapel. He also administered the Holy Communion every month. The services at all the Church Festivals and Fasts were also performed by Mr. Prout. His Mission work beyond Valle Crucis was at the same time carried on with encouraging results. There were many prejudices to overcome, and, as usual, in some instances those prejudices were intensely bitter. The opposition to primitive Church government, with its ancient orders of the Ministry, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, was found to

be very strong. And, as usual at that day, the use of a Liturgy was considered by many as entirely inconsistent with sincere devotion. Ignorance was, of course, the foundation of those prejudices. In fact, it may be said that all religious prejudice, with its legion of evil consequences, can be traced to a combination of individual pride and ignorance. Pride fosters the ignorance. It is quite remarkable what a change has come over the Christian community in America as regards many of the peculiar practices of our Church during the last half-century; much is borrowed to-day from the same Liturgy which very worthy people of the past generation considered merely an utterly lifeless form. And the ministers of different religious societies at the present hour are claiming the title of Bishop, which their fathers considered a most arrogant usurpation.

"*May all who profess and call themselves Christians be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life!*"

The backwoodsmen on the Watauga were not, however, too stubborn to be won by the

kindly Christian charity which marked the course of the Missionary. Little by little, many were softened. Many who could not read listened Sunday after Sunday to the two great lessons from the Holy Scriptures connected with the course of the Christian year, and gradually learned the happiness of celebrating in regular succession the great events of the life of our Holy and Blessed Lord. They learned to keep Christmas and Easter with joyful hearts. They learned to utter devoutly the responses of the Litany, and those after the Commandments. Gradually, by the blessing of God, a very devout spirit began to prevail among this simple people. It was at this period that a Baptism of a young man, one of the students, by immersion, took place at Valle Crucis, the point chosen for administering the sacrament being the junction of the three streams forming the cross.

The three principal missionary stations, beyond Valle Crucis, were at that time Upper Watauga, Lower Watauga, and New River. A day-school blending religious and common instruction was kept by one of the candidates for

the ministry, at Lower Watauga. Religious services were also held regularly in another school-house above Valle Crucis, where a divinity student taught a Sunday-school. There were several of these small outlying stations and day-schools. There were at this time eight students of Divinity at the Valley, all giving more or less attention to some form of Mission work. Among these Candidates for the Ministry was Mr. William R. Gries, from Pennsylvania; he had been a medical student, and his services in visiting the sick and prescribing for patients of different kinds were in constant demand, and his assistance to the suffering was very happy in its effects, by softening the prejudices of the ignorant mountaineers.

III.

THE necessary studies having been completed Mr. Skiles declared himself ready for examination; and all the requirements of the Church having been fulfilled, the time for the ordination was appointed. On the Ninth Sunday after Trinity, August 1, 1847, the solemn service took place in the Chapel at Valle Crucis —the brick basement Chapel on the hill-side.*

Mr. Jarvis Buxton and Mr. William West Skiles (the latter under the Canon of 1844) were then ordained Deacons, by Bishop Ives. The Collect for that Sunday was especially appropriate:

"Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as are right; that we who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

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* The school-house, with its brick basement Chapel, was accidentally burnt down a year or two afterward, leaving behind, as its only memorial, the bare transverse cut in the hill-side.

And the Collect at the close of the ordination service was also touchingly fulfilled by the after life of William Skiles:

"Almighty God, giver of all good things, who of Thy great goodness has vouchsafed to accept and take this Thy servant unto the Office of a Deacon in Thy Church, make him, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to be modest, humble, and constant in his ministrations—continuing ever stable and strong in Thy Son Christ."

A holy modesty, humility, and a singular constancy under severe trials, characterized the entire ministry of this servant of God.

From the day of his ordination William Skiles entered quietly and simply upon his religious duties as a Deacon, without giving up, however, the stewardship of the temporal affairs of Valle Crucis. He occasionally read the Lessons or the Daily Prayers in the Chapel, and he also now began Mission work at some of the outlying stations, reading prayers, catechizing, and occasionally preaching. It was about this time also that he gave especial attention to medical reading, with the view of following the example of Mr. Gries, by being useful to the scattered households in the

mountains in charitable services of this kind. Mr. Skiles sought some medical instruction from his brother student, and borrowed his books. Some instruction of this kind was absolutely required, as the kind-hearted steward at Valle Crucis had already frequently been called upon by the country people for medicines and advice and assistance in nursing. A supply of medicines was kept at the office for the use of the family, and the mountaineers frequently came to ask for the proper remedies in different diseases. Mr. Gries was ordained Deacon at Hillsborough in the course of the autumn, and left the valley for another field of labour. After he had gone Mr. Skiles was called upon as his medical substitute, and soon had a great deal to do in this way. He sent for books relating to the common diseases of that region and studied them carefully. Toward the autumn of 1847 the Rev. Mr. Buxton, the newly ordained Deacon, left Valle Crucis.

Happily Mr. Prout still remained as Chaplain. A new house was built for him. The different buildings were scattered about the grounds among trees and groves, within con-

venient distances of each other, but Bishop Ives was not considered happy in his architectural plans; in several of these buildings the foundations were of burnt bricks, and the superstructure of adobes, which it was intended eventually to cover with stucco. The adobes used in these buildings were made in the valley, of clay and straw, as usual, and were considered to be of good quality. But they soon began to crumble away, and in the course of the summer they were attacked by an unforeseen enemy; the humble-bees took possession of them, boring into the fresh clay to such an extent that the walls in many places looked like honeycombs, and were so much weakened that they gave way in places under the weight above them. The young students declared their belief that there could have been no humble-bees in Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs, or that they were not so fond of working in Egyptian clay as in that of North Carolina. The decay of these buildings was very rapid. And yet they were built at very great expense. It was observed that Bishop Ives took especial pleasure in making contracts, and also that he

generally had the worst of a bargain. The cost in most cases far exceeded the estimates. And in his purchase of choice stock, which he had brought from Pennsylvania at great expense, he was also unsuccessful, so far as the results appeared. The raising of fine stock was intended to become a means of support to the Mission. But nothing came of the plan.

These cattle were of course under the care of Mr. Skiles, as steward, and very faithfully did he look after them. He was always, indeed, a faithful shepherd in the highest sense of the word, very tender-hearted with all living creatures entrusted to his care, watchful to supply their wants, and kindly in his treatment of them. His thoughtful care and kindliness for the horses, cattle, and sheep was often remarked at the Mission. It was, no doubt, at first the result of his kindly nature, but it would seem to have gradually assumed the character of religious principle as his standard became higher. He considered it a Christian duty, never to be neglected with impunity. It is ever the happy result of true Christian faith to develop all that is good in the natural character.

The Mission work was gradually increasing by services held at outlying stations, and by Sunday-schools and day-schools under the teaching of the young students of divinity. The theological students were allowed two hours for study, unless there was a pressure of farm work. They were required to teach in the boys' school and also to work on the farm for two hours daily. The number of services in the Chapel varied at different periods; they were never less than three, and at times four; at sunrise, at noon, and the regular Morning and Evening Prayers. The older students were allowed to build themselves little cabins in the nearer groves, where they studied and slept — a pleasant arrangement which they much enjoyed.

IV.

THE singular beauty of the scenery in that secluded mountain basin gave great delight to the young divinity students, and to the lads of the school also. The waterfall in the narrow gorge at the head of the valley toward Hanging Rock was a favourite stroll; the flow of water was always sufficient to form a beautiful cascade, but after heavy rains in the spring and autumn, the foaming sheet became grand in character. It fell eighty feet, in three separate leaps. The banks on either side were very rugged and thickly set with laurel, like the banks of many streams in that region. At the foot of the fall the waters gathered in a little pool before winding farther down the valley. In this pool dead and mangled deer were occasionally found. When pursued by the hunters on the heights above, these timid creatures would, in their terror, leap headlong over the precipice into the basin below. It was re-

marked that while many deer had thus perished, not a single hound, of those engaged in the chase, was ever known to take that fatal leap. Deer were common on the mountains, and occasionally one would be seen from the school-room windows, in full flight, pursued across the valley by the hunters. The eager boys were generally dismissed on such occasions and allowed to follow the chase awhile. Fishing was a common recreation of the young men, angling in the pure mountain brooks, which were full of fine trout. And the larger lads were occasionally allowed to take their guns into the woods in quest of game; if they failed to return with the spoils of the bear or wolf or panther, all to be found in the depths of the forest at that date, they not infrequently shot deer or wild turkey or grouse. Indeed, it was commonly noticed that the pupils of Valle Crucis were wont to recount, in after life, with the greatest zest and fondness, their happy days spent at Valle Crucis.

Excursions for recreation were occasionally made to the more distant mountains by bands

of teachers and pupils. When not too much occupied by his duties as steward, Mr. Skiles made one of the party. He was always in kindly sympathy with the young, genial and patient with them.

Two of these holiday excursions are especially recorded, one to the Roan Mountain, of the Alleghany chain, and another to the Grandfather, the highest point of the Blue Ridge. The mountains of the Blue Ridge are marked more or less clearly with distinctive characteristics of their own. While a few show bold, rocky summits, or grand masses of rock and abrupt precipices on their flanks, others are clothed with a rich vegetation to their highest point; yonder, a dense mass of varied forest, nearer, often broad reaches of beautiful, natural meadows. The heights, which are bare, are called "Old Balds" by the country people.

The excursion to the Roan was a distant one, that mountain touching the borders of Tennessee; the ascent of three miles was abrupt. There was the usual rich and varied forest, lighted up by the luxuriant bloom of tangled shrubbery. The beautiful carpet of

mosses on the lower reaches of the mountain was frequently nearly a foot in depth. Gentian and ginseng were observed. Occasionally the party came to what the country people called a "deadening," a spot where fire had blighted the wood, leaving gray spectres of trees in the midst of the living forest. Here and there a fine "orchard" of sugar-maples was passed, as luxuriant as any in the northern Alleghanies; one such "orchard" was said to cover fifty acres of ground. The mountaineers made their own sugar. Here and there, but at long intervals, a rude log cabin might be seen, standing awkwardly by the mountain track, its small windows perhaps unglazed.

While resting near a spring, one of the young men went to a cabin near at hand in quest of buttermilk; a bountiful supply was cheerfully provided, but when the pail was returned, and payment offered, the money was refused; the good woman could not be persuaded to accept the small silver coin offered: "Keep it, man; you may want it yourself some day." There were many kind hearts among

the mountaineers, though often under a rough and undemonstrative exterior. Brother Skiles was known in most of these log-cabins, where he had nursed the sick, prayed with the people, and catechized the children in his simple, kindly way. On one rude farm a man was seen ploughing, guiding a steer, and carrying a little baby girl on his shoulder, her arms about his neck; this ploughman was known to Mr. Skiles; the father was devotedly fond of his child; he was seldom seen without her, either in his arms or on his shoulder, sitting close beside him whatever his work might be. At home, in the log cabin, where she had a good mother, the rude father was the chief nurse of his little daughter, petting her, feeding her, rocking her to sleep, and greatly enjoying her baby company. Some months later the little girl sickened and died. The father was heart-broken, with a tenderness of grief which would scarcely have been expected in one so rude in aspect.

As the travellers moved onward over higher ground they found the rhododendron growing luxuriantly four thousand feet above the sea.

At a still greater height, five thousand feet, the grasses and weeds of the low country were observed. Occasional glimpses of wild creatures, feathered or furred, added interest to the tramp. The summit, when reached, was peculiar in character, a broad, grassy prairie, several miles in extent, broken by scattered groves, and here and there by huge isolated masses of rock, or patches of dark balsam. Many cattle were feeding on this Alpine pasture, raising their heads in astonishment, as the merry young group passed onward, laughing, shouting, and leaping. It is this broad, open summit, which at certain seasons assumes a faint dun colour, that has given to the mountain the name of the Roan. It gives to the height a softer and more attractive character than the wild, shaggy forests on other neighbouring summits. The views are very beautiful, the most extensive in that region looking far away westward, over the rich Tennessee valleys. There is a huge mass of rock called the Bluff near the highest point. Here the party stood on the brink of a precipice, looking down into a wild forest

gorge below, whence a strong current of wind was rising with great force, sweeping over the summit, driving flitting clouds before it. Some of the lads threw their hats down the precipice, but they were met by the wind and whirled back again over the heads of the boys on to the prairie beyond, whence they were only recovered by a hard chase, enlivened by the wild gambols of the amazed cattle, thrown into confusion by these unusual proceedings. The highest point of the Roan is estimated by Guyot to be 6,306 feet above the sea.

On another pleasant summer day a party of twenty, under the leadership of the Missionary, the Rev. Mr. Prout, left the valley for the summit of the Grandfather, about ten miles distant. The grand old mountain, with its five rugged peaks, is the highest in the Blue Ridge, being 5,897 feet. The Watauga flows from springs on its western face. The party from Valle Crucis made their arrangements for passing the night on the summit of the mountain. The young men were armed with an axe or two for cutting firewood, and also

for clearing a path through the dense thickets. Two or three shot-guns were also provided, for killing any game that might cross their path, and also for protection against wild beasts prowling about at night. The provisions were coffee, bacon, and pones of corn bread. Two coffee-pots and a dozen tin cups dangled from the shoulder of one of the party. Each was provided with an overcoat or blanket for warmth at night. The young men enjoyed with zest the spirited delights of the ascent, accompanied almost constantly by the murmur of limpid brooks and cascades. There was no road at that date; a mere rude trail to the base of the mountain, and beyond that point the Watauga was their only guide. The woods were rich and varied on the lower reaches of the mountain, including maple, ash, hickory, walnut, oak, chestnut, chincapin, and sycamore. The linden also abounded in some places. With the usual reckless wastefulness of American forestry, the farmers of that region cut down the young linden trees in the spring that their cattle might feed on the fresh shoots, which the animals greatly enjoy.

The writer of this sketch has seen a noble white pine, perhaps four hundred years old, felled on the shore of Lake Otsego to obtain a few pounds of honey stored in one of its branches; and on another occasion a grand chestnut was found cut down in September for the nuts just ripening! Our country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf of Mexico to the most northern forest, must assuredly suffer some day from this worse than barbarous wastefulness of its woods. The people in the Blue Ridge call the linden the *linn;* and the stream flowing southward, neighbour of the Watauga, and noted for its beautiful falls, is called the Linnville, from the same tree. The undergrowth on the lower reaches of the Grandfather was composed of the usual close thickets of laurel, blended with rhododendron, entwined with creeping vines and carpetted with rich mosses. Higher on the mountain side there were dense evergreen woods of dark balsam. At length, after a hard ascent, the summit of the mountain was reached. Here, from beneath a huge rock, in the heart of a balsam wood, a noble

spring burst forth, ample in volume, bright and cheery, as if enjoying the prospect of its leaping, laughing course down the mountain side. The volume of water in these Alpine springs of North Carolina, even at a great elevation, is remarkable when it is remembered that there are no glaciers, or heights covered with perpetual snow, in the Blue Ridge. These springs flow from the heart of the mountains. They are sparkling and cold. Mr. Buxton, having a thermometer, found the temperature of this noble spring, the actual source of the Watauga, to be forty-two degrees. He named it the "Bishop Spring." The springs at Valle Crucis had been found to be fifty-two degrees.

A grand fire of dead balsam wood was soon blazing. A frugal supper of bacon, cooked Indian fashion on sticks hung over the coals, coffee and corn pones, was eaten with appetites sharpened by the keen air. Beds were made of twigs of laurel and balsam, on which the young men stretched themselves, wrapped in blanket or overcoat, with feet toward the fire. The night was very cold

at that height, even at midsummer, and the fire was frequently replenished, not only for warmth, but as a protection against any bear or panther that might be prowling about.

With the morning light all hurried to the top of the Spring Rock, which commanded a noble view eastward. A letter of the Rev. Dr. Buxton speaks with the greatest admiration of the grand sunrise seen from the top of the Grandfather Rock:

"I have seen the glorious sun-rise at sea; but nothing of sky at sea ever filled my vision with such deep impressions of glory as came from those gorgeous skies—brilliant hues ever shifting, dissolving, and re-combining, ever growing in brightness as the morning advanced, till the vast heavens seemed filled with the glory and flame of colour; while below, stretching far away into the azure, the hills still slept their lowly sleep of silence, with the heavens all aglow above them."

Later began the descent through the forest. It was the intention to strike the Watauga at a lower point, and follow its course homeward. After plunging downward some distance, the party reached a stream supposed to be the Watauga. But they were mistaken; these were the head-waters of the Linnville River,

which flows in an entirely different direction. It was only after descending some distance that the mistake was discovered. It was too late to return, or to make fresh ventures in the trackless forest. After a consultation it was decided that the safest course would be to follow the Linnville, in the hope of reaching some cabin where they could find shelter for the night. But the task of following the stream was no easy one. The banks were bordered everywhere, down to the water's edge, with an impenetrable thicket of laurel, through which, as one of the party remarked, "only a lank wolf or lithe panther or sleek rattlesnake " could make his way. They were actually forced to take to the water, in the bed of the stream, and wade down the river, often at a depth of three or four feet, at times leaping from rock to rock, occasionally slipping on the smooth, wet stones, and falling headlong into the water. The mountain trout, of which the stream was full, were much disturbed by this extraordinary invasion of their domain, and darted about in great agitation. The lads enjoyed with great glee the

adventure, including its mishaps, and made the wilderness ring with their merry shouts; but the elder members of the party felt no little anxiety, and scarcely enjoyed the idea of passing the night in the bed of the river, like so many Tritons. They looked wistfully about in the hope of discovering some log cabin, where they might find shelter, before the darkness of night fell upon them—a darkness always peculiarly dense among the close laurel undergrowth. So compact, indeed, was the thicket of laurel on the banks that it was actually impenetrable, the bushes, often small trees, overhanging the stream in many places. These dense evergreen belts of laurel, growing immediately on the river banks, are characteristic of that region, forming at all seasons a fine evergreen shrubbery. When the plants are in bloom the effect is very beautiful, as the clusters of delicate flowers are very numerous, and the garlands seem to hang lovingly over the clear, sparkling waters, as they speed rapidly on their downward course over a bed of golden-coloured pebbles. After a high wind, or a heavy shower, the delicate blossoms are

strewn over the water in lavish profusion. The party from Valle Crucis was compelled by this impenetrable hedge to wade long miles through the channel of the stream. They pushed bravely on, however, and at nightfall came to a small clearing in which stood the solitary cabin of a hunter. It was built of unhewn logs; the chimney consisted of sticks, crossing one another, well daubed inside and out with clay. The roof was shingled with oak boards three or four feet long, kept in place by logs laid lengthwise, well pinned down, with here and there a heavy stone to give additional strength against winds. The floor was of hewn lumber, three or four inches thick. There was but one room in the cabin, with a rude bed or two in one corner, three or four rough chairs of home make, a bench or two, a table to match in the centre, and a huge fireplace where logs of six or seven feet could be piled together. Over the door, on wooden pegs, lay the rifle, always within reach, and always loaded. Against the outer wall of the cabin were hung antlers of deer, while skins of wolf, bear, and panther

were hung up there to dry. Here, in the heart of the forest, lived Larchin Calloway, a famous hunter, and here the party from Valle Crucis were made heartily welcome. They were hungry, and dripping wet from head to foot; but the latch-string of a mountain cabin door always hangs outside, in token of welcome, and cheerfully did the rugged hunter and his womankind set before their guests the best in their larder; abundance of rich buttermilk; freshly churned butter; potatoes, red, long, large, and mealy; with pones of corn bread, and coffee of parched rye. The hospitable board was replenished again and again.

The floor of the cabin was the only bed; the young men stretched themselves out in their wet clothes before the blazing fire of huge logs, slept soundly, and not one of the party took cold. It was a common saying at Valle Crucis that if a man tried to take cold, after a thorough wetting, he could not bring it about in that high mountain region, so bracing and healthful was the air!

The next morning, after an early breakfast, the few shillings to be found in missionary

pockets were, with some difficulty, forced upon the hunter, who was unwilling to receive any payment for providing for twenty hungry men and boys. In a few hours the party were at home again.

In cabins like this Mr. Skiles and his brother missionaries were often sheltered and always hospitably received.

V.

In August of 1847 the Rev. Mr. Buxton left Valle Crucis, and entered upon missionary and parochial duties at Asheville, where he still remains after a ministry of forty-two years*—1889—one of the most respected among the clergy of the Diocese. Thanks be to God for this and every other long pastorate!

The Rev. William Glennie French was then placed by the Bishop at the head of the Institution, in 1847.

Important changes took place at Valle Crucis during the year 1847. The work became strictly religious, including the Divinity School and Missions. The school for boys was broken up, and the few lads remaining in the valley were sent to their homes. The store was closed, the goods on hand being sold at cost, or given in some instances to the poor.

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* Dr. Buxton has lately resigned his charge at Asheville, to take effect March next.

There were at that date three religious services in the Chapel every day—full Morning and Evening Prayers, and also a short noonday service, in which all took part. Mr. Skiles not infrequently read the Lessons. Great attention was paid to training the young men in singing; all who had good voices were required to practise Church music regularly, and the result was remarkably successful. The chanting was unusually good. A clergyman of long and varied experience declared recently that he could not remember ever hearing the Church Anthems so effectively and so nobly sung as by the choir of men and boys at Valle Crucis, whether at the daily services, or at the Holy Communion in that old basement Chapel, in the scattered school-houses, at Mission services, or when gathered about the grave of some poor member of the flock.

The Mission work was pushed forward with energy. The seed sown earlier by the first missionary, the Rev. Mr. Prout, was now yielding good fruit, and the zeal of the young men at different outlying stations produced happy results. The rural population were softened by

these charitable labours in their midst, the influence of the Church and her system was felt and acknowledged. The good people learned the chants and anthems, and took pleasure in singing them in their rude but kindly homes. Little bands of men and women, after leaving the schoolhouse or cabin where a Sunday service had been held, would often go on their way through the forest paths chanting the Benedicite—a holy song of praise never before heard in those ancient forests. And these were people who could not read. It seemed as if the Church were about to be cordially received into the hearts of the simple backwoodsmen. The Chapel on the hill-side was much improved, within its walls, at least, and with a suitable chancel and furniture received a more religious character.* Many of the country people from the neighbouring hills and valleys now attended the Sunday services regularly, and occasionally a few would come in for the daily Prayers. There was a little colony of

* The Bishop's chair, ingeniously constructed out of laurel by a member of the Mission (Rev. Mr. Bland) still may be seen at Valle Crucis, a valued relic.

German Lutherans at no great distance, who gladly became connected with the parish at Valle Crucis, bringing their children for Baptism, and receiving Confirmation and the Holy Communion in the Chapel. Several Baptists and Methodists also became connected with the parish. These worthy mountaineers were naturally intelligent, and their hearts opened readily to receive the good instruction offered to them. Their ignorance of letters was very touching, when combined with natural shrewdness, and willingness to receive religious teaching. The good Lord had given them the hearing ear, and, receiving holy truths into the "honest and good heart" of the parable, many brought forth blessed fruits. They were deeply impressed by the reverent solemnity of the Holy Sacraments. And the noble, ancient chants of the Church seemed to penetrate to their very hearts' core. At times they sang them with tears in their eyes. The mode of instruction employed by the missionaries was well adapted to their condition. Direct, earnest, plain, catechizing, the heart-stirring Liturgy, the noble chants, with short, simple

sermons, assumed something of the character of the ancient Gospel instruction, when books were few, and the faithful were hearers rather than readers. The missionaries, however, pressed on the secular schools at the same time that their daily religious instruction was necessarily in a great measure oral and catechetical, among a people who could not read. They were looking anxiously forward to the happy moment when the Holy Scriptures should be read in every household, when the good people should come to the Lord's House bearing the Prayer-Book in their hands. Ignorance is an element never yet fostered by our Church. A number of these humble believers in the wilds of the Watauga country seemed to receive the Christian Faith as in very truth the *Pearl of Great Price*, to be regarded as their greatest treasure. One of the older missionaries remarked that "*it seemed as if Christ was indeed their Life.*"

Among the converts was a poor woman whose previous life had been one of gross sin. She was very ignorant, but wandered into the Chapel on some occasion and listened to

the service. She returned again. Her heart became deeply touched by the Confession, the Prayers, the Lessons, and the preaching. Again and again she returned to occupy a seat near the door. At length she seemed to follow instinctively in the steps of the Magdalen, throwing herself at the Lord's feet, and opening that poor, sinful heart to the fulness of lowly, penitent faith. Many were the tears she shed. She seemed never to weary of the holy services. Quiet, earnest, reserved, she now walked humbly day by day in the paths of penitence and love.

VI.

BUT while the work of Missions was thus moving happily onward, dark clouds were gathering over the Diocese of North Carolina.

In the month of June, 1847, Bishop Ives passed two weeks at Valle Crucis, and during that time a new religious element was introduced into the work. This was the Order of the Holy Cross, planned by himself, and which he intended, *it was said*, to develop into a monastic institution, connected with the Divinity School. The Bishop was to be General of the Order. The members were to be divided into three classes, one at the valley, taking the three mediæval vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience; a second class, with lighter vows, and a third to become general in the Diocese. Both clergy and laity might belong to either class. Celibacy was enjoined on all members at the valley, but might cease after a time, unless the individual wished to make the vow perpetual.

The Rev. Mr. French was appointed, by the Bishop, Superior of the new Order, that appointment having been declined by the Rev. Mr. Buxton, to whom it was offered. As might have been foreseen, many of the divinity students, with the glow of youthful devotion, became connected with the Order. And the newly ordained Deacon, William Skiles, also assumed its obligations. This was a step which, under the peculiar circumstances, might have been expected from a man of his character. All that was excellent in the spirit of the Order, the self-denial, the devotion, the charity, must have been attractive to his religious nature. The dangers from exaggeration and superstition, from what may be called private fancy—a very common abuse of private judgment in this century—he could not foresee. The history of the Church in past ages, its mediæval history, must have been very imperfectly known to him. But it is a happy truth that what might have become dangerous to this good man, in the new Order, authorized as it was by his Bishop, would seem never to have disturbed his faith or his practice. No trace of

superstition can be found in his private life or in his public teaching. He was ever a devout, simple-minded Christian, a perfectly sincere Churchman. And here we may also observe that no member of the Order from Valle Crucis abandoned our Church.

From this period the course of Bishop Ives was such as to cause great anxiety to his friends. There gradually appeared a vacillation, a contradiction, an irritability, in his language and action, which those who knew him most intimately attributed in a great measure to his physical condition. Of his earnestness, his zeal, his disinterestedness, there could be no doubt. But discretion and judgment appeared to waver. Valle Crucis, the institution founded by himself, and the seat of the new Order of the Holy Cross, of which he was the General, naturally felt the ill effects of this state of things. Misgiving, doubt, grave suspicion, increased rapidly. As might have been foreseen, there was much exaggeration, and even injustice, floating about the Diocese as to the state of things at the valley. These unfavourable reports naturally affected the financial support of the Divin-

ity School and the Mission. A time of severe privation was at hand.

The community had worshipped but a short time in the basement Chapel, after its improvement, when the whole building was destroyed by an accidental fire. What was to be done? There was no other room on the Mission grounds at all suitable for a Chapel. But the question was soon decided. The brave little band determined to build for themselves. They knew that money for Valle Crucis was now raised with great difficulty. Funds that had been confidently expected were not received. The institution was very poor. Without delay they began to work with their own hands, every member of the Mission taking part in the labour, which was severe. The plan was drawn by the Rev. Mr. French. The foundation was dug, the lumber prepared, and the work carried on by the young men themselves. The practical experience of William Skiles was of great service on this occasion; as we have already said, in his youth he had been employed in important mills; he was a good judge of lumber, and skilful in preparing it. The position

chosen for the new Chapel was in a grove at the foot of the hill. The design was Gothic in character. The unhappy experience in previous years with crumbling adobe walls in that climate decided the nature of the material—it was to be entirely a wooden building. The appearance of the little Chapel when completed was very neat. The sides were weather-boarded with planks nailed vertically to the frame. The floor was laid with undressed planks, not jointed; so that it was rough and open. The windows were simply frames, with canvas nailed across them. Sashes, and glass, were too expensive to be thought of.

At six o'clock every morning the bugle was heard summoning all to the new Chapel, and fifteen minutes later the morning service began. All were required to be present, unless absent from necessity. Summer and winter the hours for the services were the same. And it happened frequently that the little community met for the early Prayers, during the cold winter mornings, in this open Chapel, which could not be heated and where the windows were unglazed; while the thermom-

eter reached perhaps ten or twelve degrees below zero. A number of the students were not absent from these services once during the entire year.

Study for three hours followed Prayers and breakfast. The meals were, of necessity, becoming more and more frugal. Very frequently the dinner consisted of a good-sized piece of bread, and an ample supply of milk from the herd in which Mr. Skiles, "Brother William," as he was now frequently called was so much interested. The Rev. Mr. French was usually addressed as "Father William." After dinner came the work on the farm, often very hard work. By the Rules of the Mission two hours of labour were required of every member of the community. But funds had now failed entirely; nothing reached Valle Crucis from abroad, and so entirely were the young men thrown on their own resources, their daily bread depended so entirely upon the produce of the farm, that during the harvest season, days, and even weeks, passed without study. Manual labour was needed from all, throughout the summer day. As a rule, when the work

was not very pressing, the young men were still allowed two hours for study, in the afternoon. But, as the poverty of the Mission increased, the labour for daily bread became so engrossing, that a portion of the students deemed it a duty they owed to the Sacred Ministry for which they were preparing, to withdraw from the Institution, and seek situations where they might provide the means of living by teaching, a portion of the time, and thus secure more hours for carrying on their studies with regularity. Bishop Ives never refused his consent to an application of this nature, though he always endeavoured to dissuade the young men from leaving the House, holding out hopes of a speedy improvement in the condition of the funds. All who knew him remarked that he was a very sanguine man, counting too largely upon favourable results. Such was the condition of affairs in 1848.

The Diocese at large was becoming very anxious on the subject of Valle Crucis. There were painful rumours as to the working of the Order of the Holy Cross. Nevertheless, the

Committee on the State of the Church, at the Convention of '48, meeting at Wilmington, made a favourable Report with regard to the Institution:

"The importance of this Institution to the Diocese is immense as the nursery of a future Ministry. It appears to possess peculiar advantages for this work, not only from the retirement for the time being of its students from the distractions of society, and the hardy and useful discipline to which they are inured, but also in the great economy with which it can be conducted, your Committee being informed that $50 apiece, per annum, may be made to cover all necessary expenses, except those for clothing. It has been placed under the charge of a highly capable presbyter, and is supported by the self-denying labours of a body of young men who have literally left all for Christ. Still it needs the fostering care of the members of the Church."

Owing to severe illness, which lasted two months, the Bishop was absent at his home. His record of Episcopal acts was read to the Convention. This long illness, which prevented attention to official duties until the autumn, was said by his physicians to have weakened his whole system, and in some measure, to have destroyed the healthful balance of his mind. From that date there appeared in

manner, in word, and in action, a peculiar inconsistency, and vacillation, which was remarked by all in frequent intercourse with him. The agitation, and anxiety in the Diocese were much increased by this condition of the Bishop.

Meanwhile, in the midst of trials and privations the work at Valle Crucis was carried on with regularity and encouraging results. The Rev. Mr. French reported

"Added to the Church 22 souls." "Confirmed 6." "Much of our success as Missionaries is due to the years of patient labour of Mr. Prout, among the mountaineers. He has been the sole priestly representative of the Church for a long season. And now we have the earnest, and zealous co-operation of Rev. Wm. Passmore, Deacon."

Rev. Mr. Prout reports:

"Much improvement has been effected in the religious condition of the people in this section within the year. The Church is felt to be permanently fixed here, and is consequently exerting a steady influence on the population. The hopes of the members, and friends of this Mission, are beginning to be realized, and we are cheered, while we wish only to work in quietness, and faith. We derive new confidence of final success in our work by widening continually the entire adaptation of the arrangements of the Church, to the wants, and capacities of a plain, uneducated people."

Rev. W. Passmore, Deacon, reports assisting at the services at Valle Crucis three times daily, also,

"Sunday services at South Fork on New River; at Lower Watauga; on the Linnville; and on North Fork of New River: Baptisms 15, Confirmed 4; Communicants added 6. At Lower Watauga the Church is now firmly established, and is growing rapidly. At other places the prospect is brightening as the prejudices of the people have been in a great measure removed."

At the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Passmore to the Priesthood, which took place later, an incident occurred which shows the illiterate condition of the people, the great want of schools. The signatures of ten communicants were required, for the testimonials of good standing, and moral character. Only five among the lay communicants of the different Mission stations could be found capable of writing their own names. Five of those worthy men made their marks, instead of writing.

VII.

THE agitation in the Diocese was now becoming very serious.

At the Convention held at Salisbury, May, '49, Bishop Ives, in his opening Address, reported a visit to Valle Crucis:

"On the 18th Sunday after Trinity, I officiated in the Chapel erected by the members of the establishment, to a large and serious congregation, confirmed five persons, and celebrated the Holy Communion. For the quieting of some minds, disturbed by unfounded rumours, I beg the Diocese to be assured that, at this religious House no doctrine will be taught, or practice allowed, which is not in accordance with the principles, and usages of our Branch of the Holy Catholic Church, contained in the Book of Common Prayer. And furthermore that the property of the establishment has been secured to the Church, for the use of the Mission, on the above specified conditions."

The Committee on the State of the Church, at the same Convention, closed their Report, otherwise satisfactory, with the following passage:

"They deplore the existence of great agitation and alarm, arising from the impression that doctrines have been preached not in accordance with the Liturgy, and Articles of this Church, and that ceremonies, and practices have been introduced, either unauthorized by the customs of this Church, or in plain violation of its rubrics. * * * Another cause of alarm, as the Committee believe, has been found in the supposition that a Society has existed in this Diocese, whose character, rules, and practices are at variance with the spirit, if not with the laws of this Church. The Committee have assurance, on which they entirely rely, that no such Society is, at present, in existence in this Diocese."

The Society alluded to was, of course, the Order of the Holy Cross. The assurance came from the Bishop. At a later day the Bishop declared that, from the date of the Convention at Salisbury, the Order had been dissolved. Its regular existence therefore scarcely covered two years.

The Bishop was again ill. But he sent a short Charge to be read to the Convention, very earnest in denying any doctrines or practices, repugnant to the doctrines, and usages of our Branch of the Church:

"Your Bishop does, by way of Charge, hereby address you, and authorize you, when you return to your parishes to assure

your people that no efforts shall be wanting on his part, so long as God gives him jurisdiction in North Carolina, to hinder the inculcation of any doctrine, or the introduction of any practice—come from whatever quarter it may—not in strict accordance with the Liturgy of our Church, as illustrated and defined by those standards of interpretation, authorized by the Church itself. In respect to a particular question which has agitated the Diocese of late, the question of auricular confession, I may here express my conviction that the Book of Common Prayer, our standard of Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship, does not authorize any clergyman of this Church to teach, or enforce such confession, as necessary to Salvation, and that the only Confession which it authorizes is the voluntary Confession of the penitent, in accordance with the exhortation in the Office of the Holy Communion."

The Convention was so greatly relieved by this communication from the Bishop that it ordered 1,000 copies of a pamphlet containing the Charge of the Bishop, with the Report of the Committee on the State of the Church, to be distributed throughout the Diocese.

The Mission work at Valle Crucis continued to move quietly, and steadily, onward, in the midst of these difficulties. One or two new stations were added. The number of blacks in that part of the State was not large, but a

small coloured flock was collected for service, and instructed by catechizing on Sunday evenings by Mr. Prout. And the hearts of the Missionaries were cheered by the marked improvement in the moral, and religious tone of the people as shown in their daily life. This was a frequent subject of remark, among those familiar with the country.

In July Bishop Ives came again to the Valley, remaining there a month, preaching on all the Sundays, in the Chapel, or at the different Mission Stations. Thirteen persons were confirmed in the Chapel. During this visit the Bishop addressed to the Diocese a Pastoral Letter. The effect was not happy. It was considered in a measure, a defiance of the Diocese, and a partial retraction of the Charge written three months earlier. The agitation in the Diocese was renewed.

As a consequence, the difficulties at Valle Crucis also increased. Support in the way of funds ceased almost entirely, and the Mission was thrown exclusively on its own resources. Some of the students had already sought work elsewhere. The Head of the Mission at the

Valley, the Rev. Mr. French, was hesitating as to the course he should take. The Mission family had become very small, consisting of Mr. French, Mr. Passmore, and Mr. Skiles; three candidates soon to be ordained, Messieurs Bland, Barber, and Murphy, Divinity Students; Mr. Geo. Patterson, Mr. Heber Dobbins, and Mr. H. Thomas, Mr. William Alston, a coloured student, with Mr. Dafter.

In this discouraging state of things, a combination of religious agitation, and pecuniary embarrassment, the year 1850 opened upon the Mission. Throughout these trials Mr. Skiles moved steadily onward in the path of quiet duty; prudent and faithful to every trust; patient, tolerant, and full of the spirit of charity. At this period, during the winter of 1850, he made a visit to his friends in the lower country. Apparently one object of his journey was the hope of rendering quiet service to Valle Crucis, by personal communication with the friends of the Institution. His sterling character was already well known, and sincerely respected. As a member of the recently abolished Order of the Holy Cross, he

could bear testimony to the exaggeration of the reports injurious to the House, and he could also testify from personal observation to the many privations of the community. We give passages from letters written about that time to the Rev. Mr. French,

"SOMERSET PLACE, *Jan.* 10*th*, 1850.

"I have been at the house of Mr. Collins since Saturday last. I was staying in Plymouth, and my friend Mr. Fitzgerald came there and hunted me up, and would have me come here; though I was not prepared at the time, I could not resist his persuasions. I shall have to visit the Lake again (Lake Scuppernong), as Mr. Collins is not at home. I have seen him only a few moments at Plymouth; I am anxious to see more of him, and I understand he wishes to see me, and have a long talk with me. * * * I have been suffering from my back very much, and have just put myself under the care of a physician, who is very kind, and advises me to have something done forthwith, as he says my case is one that should not be delayed. I have been treated with the greatest kindness by all my friends, and have met with a hearty welcome here, and have received every attention—more than I could wish. Bro. Shepherd was very glad to see me, and has been very kind to me. I have spent most of my time with him, and with my friend Fred. Fitzgerald. I have assisted Bro. Shepherd several times in the Lake Chapel, and last Sunday I was at Pettigrew Chapel, and aided him in the services. * * * I hope Mr. Dafter will come back satis-

fied and will remain. Please write me immediately. Tell George Patterson not to forget to send me some Osage Orange seed, as many as can be sent in a letter. I forgot to bring them to my friend Mr. Goelet. Please do not forget this. I fear Valle Crucis is in bad favour with Churchmen in this Diocese ; there seems a want of confidence in the teaching, even in this part of the Diocese, where they are certainly more friendly than in other portions. I regret exceedingly to find it so—but so it is, and those doubts seem hard to remove. Some things that are small matters in themselves, have given rise to suspicions, and many reports have added strength to them, in the minds of many. And when some of the reports are denied, they answer though these may be false, yet there has been cause for doubt, and they cannot help thinking there has been more than they know of. I have had two opportunities of receiving Communion since I left you. Last Sunday I received it from the Bishop. I am spending my time very pleasantly here with Bro. Shepherd and friend Fred. until dinner. After that time we all ride for exercise. * * * Please write."

Not long after the date of this letter, the Rev. Mr. French left Valle Crucis, and removed from the Diocese. The Rev. Mr. Passmore then took charge of the Institution by the appointment of the Bishop. The Rev. Mr. French became connected with the arduous work of the City Mission in New York, where he has continued his zealous labours until th

present date, 1889. Mr. Skiles remained in the low country until spring. On his return to Valle Crucis, he wrote to Mr. French. The letter gives a glimpse of his work, and of his character.

"VALLE CRUCIS, *May 21st*, 1850.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,

* * * "I regretted very much that I did not see you before you left V. C. Little did I think when we parted on the road, the morning I started for the East, that we should not meet again in V. C. But I hope God will order all things for the best. * * * I had an exceedingly tedious, and fatiguing journey homeward, and a very disagreeable one altogether. I was nearly worn out when I reached home It was three weeks from the time I left Plymouth until I arrived here. Such roads I never travelled in all my life. I stopped several days on the road and met with a good deal of kindness in Raleigh, and all along the road, from Church people. I reached home in a snow-storm, at 9 o'clock at night, the Wednesday before Easter, and found the number here very small, but I hope contented, except W. Alston (coloured) who I think intends leaving this spring. The Dafters all left soon after I arrived. We have had the most disagreeable spring I have ever known, and the most backward. There has been more cold weather than I have ever known, and rain almost incessantly, though we have gotten all our corn planted, and oats sowed, and manure nearly all out. We have now our beets and turnips to plant; our wheat begins to look very well. Rye is backward. We had

frost this week that bit our corn that was up. I have had fire in my room every morning. I expect to commence going down the River next Sunday. I shall go down two Sundays in each month, and teach the children, and read service. I shall have to give up my school here to George, most of the time. Mr. Prout goes down the 3rd Sunday in every month, and I go down the 2nd and 4th Sundays. Mr. Prout and family are all well, they were over here Sunday. I was at Boon Tuesday, and saw a great crowd; it was Court week, and I witnessed an amusing scene. There was a man intoxicated, who was very rude, and treated the Court with contempt. For want of a jail to put him in, the Court ordered him taken out and tied to a wagon wheel until he became civil. They took him out, tied him, and left him tied. I have to ask you about a coat the bishop gave me in Raleigh. It was he said one you gave him last fall, and he gave it to me, and as I was not enabled to buy any clothes down the country, it was very acceptable, but I did not like to keep it without asking your consent; if you were not willing I would be glad to know what to do with it, as I shall feel bound to do with it as you direct. I hope we shall meet again in this life. I am sure I should be very glad to see you again. I have plenty of hard work to do, and am very tired. I have but little time to write. William Alston will I think leave here for Raleigh by the early part of the summer; he says he has no associates here, and feels lonely. We all have had to work very hard this spring, and were so tired after our labours were finished that we were glad to get to our rooms, and rest. We shall expect the Bishop in July, probably early in the month. Please write me on receipt of

this. I shall be very glad to hear from you. Believe me, as ever, your faithful friend and Bro. in Christ. May the Lord be with you, and prosper you in your labours of love for your fellow-men."

From this period the ministerial work of Mr. Skiles increased steadily. The Students of Divinity were ordained, or left the valley for other positions, and their vacant places were not filled. His work on the farm was also much increased. Never an idle man—free from the sin of indolence, most assuredly—his physical strength would now appear to have been often overtaxed. His health was not good.

The Report of the Rev. Mr. Passmore to the Convention of 1850 gives the following facts: "At outlying stations; Baptisms 28, Confirmations 11, Communicants 17. The Record for Valle Crucis follows, including the services of the Rev. Mr. French until his departure: Baptisms 50, Confirmations 13, Communicants 25. Mr. Passmore adds:

"The Church in this region is flourishing. It is however planted among the poorest class of people, so that the work must probably for a long time to come be purely Missionary

work. The people are plain and simple in their habits, and generally do not care to make more than a living. But there has been a great change wrought through the Church in the habits of the people. Indeed, every day almost, we can see some change from worse to better, in some individual, or in some department of life. For this reason your Missionary believes that we have good ground for thanking God, and taking courage, notwithstanding our manifold trials."

This shows clearly a satisfactory state of things as regards the Mission among a poor, and scattered population, formerly strongly prejudiced against the Church. But the work was to be still more severely tried, owing to the unhappy course of Bishop Ives.

VIII.

THE Convention of the Diocese met in the month of May 1850 at Elizabeth City. Bishop Ives in his address alluded to his Pastoral letter of July 1849, which had caused much agitation in the Diocese. He assured the Clergy, as a body, of his entire confidence in their affection, their charity, and firm adherence to the faith, and discipline of the Church. He alluded to his nearly twenty years' service among them. He added as follows:

"I claim no infallibility beyond honesty of purpose, and diligence of duty; and no indulgence beyond that which is extended to every man labouring under the infirmities of a human judgment, and the oft-recurring, and sometimes prostrating diseases of the human body." "I neither teach nor hold, as some have thought, *Private Confession and Absolution in the Romish sense.*" "As regards *Christ's Real Presence* in the Holy Eucharist, I neither teach, nor hold it, in the sense of *Transubstantiation.*" "I do not hold nor teach, that the creatures of Bread and Wine in the Holy Eucharist are to be re-

served, and carried about, lifted up, or worshipped." "I do not teach nor hold that our Church allows any address by way of Prayer, or Invocation, to the Blessed Virgin, or to any Saint or Angel; I regard the Romish doctrine of Invocation of Saints, implying meritorious mediation, as clearly derogatory to Christ, and opposed to God's Word." "Finally, I do not teach nor hold that our Branch of the Catholic Church is, from any cause, in heresy, or schism, or that she is destitute of the true sacramental system."

Towards the close of the Convention, the Bishop sent the following communication to that Body.

"Brethren of the Convention, * * * Aware that the difficulties of this Diocese, to which I have alluded in my Address, still threaten the peace of the same, and being anxious to do all in my power to restore harmony and good will, I hereby ask of you a Committee of Clergymen, and Laymen, to investigate all the circumstances connected therewith, and to report to a future Convention of this Body.

"L. Silliman Ives,

"*Bishop of North Carolina.*"

In accordance with this request of the Bishop, a Committee of Six was appointed, to report to the next convention. In the usual Report on the State of the Church, that Committee expressed great satisfaction, with the ex-

planation given by the Bishop, of the doctrines held, and taught by him, and looked forward with hope to the "restoration of the peace and harmony for which this Diocese was formerly distinguished."

Meanwhile in spite of many difficulties the Mission work at Valle Crucis was carried on with unceasing fidelity, Mr. Skiles becoming more prominent in the scattered mountain stations, while the Rev. Mr. Prout, and the Rev. Mr. Passmore were also engaged in the same duties. Mr. Prout had now, however, left his former home at Valle Crucis, and was living at the Upper Watauga Settlement. The disturbance in the Diocese, and the diminished number of labourers, at the different stations naturally produced some effect among the country people, though less than might have been supposed. There was still much that was encouraging in many households connected with the Church. The good people still came from their scattered mountain homes, along the forest paths, to attend the services; and they were regular in coming to the Holy Communion. And the great Church Festivals were reverently

observed; there still came together at Valle Crucis, in the rude Chapel built by the young men, or at the log house of Mr. Prout on the Upper Watauga, devout men and women from all the neighbouring stations. Christmas, and Easter, and Whitsunday, were Holy Days, full of religious joy, and gracious charities. Yes; thanks be to God, so long as the world shall last, those sacred Festivals connected with the sublime events in the life on earth of our blessed Lord must ever bring the holy joys of Faith to the hearts of the devout, even when they recur amid individual sorrows, or beneath the clouds of public disturbance, or even among trials within the bosom of the Church Herself.

"The Lord reigneth be the Earth never so unquiet!"

The settlement on the Upper Watauga had become a station of especial interest.

"The house of the Widow Moody," writes Mr. Prout, "was long a sort of social centre on the Upper Watauga. Here the Missionary first learned—in 1842—that a log cabin may shelter happy people. More generous, sweeter Christian hospitality, more glad, more cheerful kind-

ness, are seldom met with, than this worthy family showed me when a stranger, and alone. There was a native refinement, and a balance of judgment about the character of the mother of the family. I shall not soon forget her invariable reply to the inquiries of her friends, when asking after her welfare—she was blind, with many infirmities, and many cares, and yet the answer of Christian Faith never failed : ' Thank God, no reason to complain ! ' There was in that far-off frontier settlement, a simplicity of manner, a generous tone, not often excelled—a graceful modesty, an unassuming dignity, very rare—but in harmony with the grand, and beautiful scenery of the region. The last house of the settlement was built at the very base of the ' Grandfather.' The clearings about these isolated cabins were so narrow as to be almost unperceived in the vast majestic wilderness of stately trees. The loneliness of the settlers however, never seemed to mar their cheerfulness. And yet I recall scenes of great distress, in times of sickness, and death. On one occasion I remember the children were all ill, at the last cabin—no doctor, no medicines, and not much food—

and all, sick and well in one room, the only room. A walk through the forest, in the night, brought the Missionary there, to render all the service in his power. Two of the children died before daybreak. During the next day, decent preparations were made, with great exertion, and in the evening the children were buried in one grave, by torchlight. It was the best we could do."

It was in this wild scattered hamlet on the Upper Watauga, where some eight or nine years earlier, he had been so kindly received when a lonely wanderer, that Mr. Prout was now living, in a log house, built partly with his own hands. The parishioners here were more numerous, than at any other station. Here the services had been frequent, and were well attended. The Missionary was anxious to build a little Chapel. And quite unexpectedly, he was encouraged in the plan by an unforeseen offering of $300, from a layman of the Church, who did not wish his name recorded, excepting as "*a man in affliction.*" The work was immediately commenced. The site chosen was a ledge of rock, on the Western bank of

the Watauga, and only a few rods from the cabin of the Missionary. It was built of logs, very neatly hewn by the loving hands of Levi Moody, the widow's son, "a good, guileless man." This rustic Chapel was about 40 feet long, and 15 wide, very compactly built. There was a little chancel at the East end, with an oaken altar, beneath a window. There was also a narrow window in each of the side walls. The roof was steep, and showed the rafters on the inside. The seats were rude benches. Loving pains were taken to give the little Chapel a neat appearance and appropriate character, without, and within. The Missionary gave it the name of "Easter Chapel," in especial reference to the doctrine of the Resurrection, and in connection with the devotion of the mountaineers in keeping that great Festival. Bishop Ives was expected to consecrate the building, at his next Visitation.

IX.

THE Convention of '51 was held at Fayetteville. Mr. Skiles was a member, and took his seat as Missionary for Watauga. Mr. Passmore, Missionary at Valle Crucis, reported Baptisms 17; Confirmations 8; Communicants 23. Mr. Prout, Missionary at John's River, and parts adjacent reported Baptisms 13; Confirmed 6; Communicants added 3.

The Committee of Inquiry, asked for by the Bishop, was increased in number to twelve members, with additional powers for investigation, and conference with the Bishop.

The Committee reported a conference with the Bishop, in which he alluded to "a high state of nervous excitement, arising either from bodily disease or a constitutional infirmity." He declared that he had been "insensibly led into the adoption of opinions on matters of doctrine, and to a public teaching of them, of the impropriety of which he was

now fully satisfied, and upon a review of those opinions wonders that he should ever have entertained them. That this change in his views had been brought about in part, by a return to a more healthy condition of body and mind." He then mentioned particularly his having tolerated the Romish notion of the Invocation of Saints, which he "now retracts, and would denounce as strongly as any one." He mentions "extravagances of opinions, or expressions" on Auricular Confession and Absolution, which he now rejects. He declared he was "now satisfied beyond a doubt our Church was not in a state of schism, on which point, he had once entertained doubts." That he had always "abhorred the doctrine of Transubstantiation." That "the spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist was the doctrine our Church teaches"—not Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist.

Such, essentially, was the paper signed by Bishop Ives. With regard to the Order of the Holy Cross he declared that, "No such order is now in existence." "That from his experience of the result upon the minds of the

young men, he is now satisfied that no vows besides those expressly required by our Ritual ought to be taken in our Church; and furthermore that any vows beyond these are contrary to the spirit of our Church, and are a temptation and a snare to those who take them. And that Valle Crucis is now only a Missionary Station."

Dr. Page, the Bishop's physician, had addressed a letter to the Committee giving a decided medical opinion, that the Bishop's mind had been affected to a certain extent by the state of his health. Other testimony from trustworthy authority declared that for several years the Bishop had been in a state of mental excitement which had impaired his memory, and had rendered quite uncertain the determination of his judgment. An oral statement, quite in detail, was also made by Mr. Collins, a warm personal friend of the Bishop, showing that his mind, had been for several years past, after an attack of fever, singularly affected, so as to impair his judgment, and enfeeble his memory, while other faculties had been unduly excited. "A state of mind," ob-

served the Committee, "well calculated to mislead its subject, and at the same time expose him to gross misconception on the part of others."

The Bishop continued to take his usual part in the religious services of the Convention, and a strong feeling of tenderness, and sympathy for his peculiar situation was felt by many. On the last day, June 2nd, towards the close of the proceedings, and aware of the facts reported by the Committee, Mr. Badger rose and asked leave to withdraw a Resolution offered by him early in the Session, asking for the resignation of the Bishop. Leave was unanimously granted.

The Convention of 1852 met in May at Fayetteville. Mr. Skiles was again one of the delegates.

In his Address the Bishop expressed great thankfulness for the peace, and unity of the Diocese. A passage from his Address follows:

"In our Branch of the Church Catholic there are pleasing indications of increased stability in the Faith, and increased zeal for the salvation of men. But what, in the view of your Bishop is at present demanded to give depth, and sub-

stantial reality to this advancement, is a thorough knowledge of, and simple adherence to the *Teaching of the Book of Common Prayer*. As Churchmen we are bound, as honest men even, to shape our Faith, and practice to its plain, and natural meaning—to allow no fancy, or prejudice, of our minds to warp that meaning, or become the ground of departure from it."

On this topic, in its different bearings, the Bishop enlarged very fully. It was the principal subject of his Address. He mentioned a service at Valle Crucis:

"Fifth Sunday after Trinity, in the morning, at the Church of the Holy Cross, Valle Crucis, preached, confirmed three persons, and celebrated the Lord's Supper. In the evening preached at the house of Rev. Mr. Prout at Upper Watauga."

The Report of the Rev. Mr. Prout to the same Convention follows:

"I have held Divine service once a month at Linnville, about 12 miles from my residence, during half the year. Once a month I have preached, and administered the Holy Communion, at Valle Crucis. At my own residence, Upper Watauga monthly services have been held. On the remaining Sunday of each month, I have preached at Lower Watauga. This latter station I have frequently visited twice a month, delivering familiar lectures on the Catechism. The Rev. Mr. Skiles, Deacon, officiating at this Station, has also held

monthly services there, on Sundays, also in the Chapel at Valle Crucis ; and has visited on New River, holding Divine service. He has conducted a Sunday School, during the year, with an average attendance of fifteen children. Also a day school for the children in the neighbourhood of Valle Crucis, for about four months, and a catechetical class of coloured persons has been formed under his care. Baptisms 5; Confirmed 3; Communicants 18 ; Offertory Collections $10.40. The construction of a Chapel in the neighbourhood of my residence, through the liberality of a layman of the Church, is so far advanced that it will probably be ready for Consecration next summer."

At this date Mr. Prout, and Mr. Skiles, had become the only labourers in the Watauga country. The Rev. Mr. Passmore had left the Diocese. The Class of students at Valle Crucis was dispersed, all having been ordained, and the Divinity School broken up. William Skiles was now the only one of the former community, remaining in the valley. But he did not abandon the ground. Every exertion in his power was now made by him for the spiritual benefit of the scattered flock in that neighbourhood.

Meanwhile "the good, and guileless man," hewing so neatly the logs of the Chapel at

Upper Watauga, had, with the assistance of others, completed the good work. The little fund given by the "man in affliction," had been prudently used, and a neat and churchly little building of hewn logs stood complete on the rock. The Missionary gave it the name of "Easter Chapel," and the property was deeded to the Church. Bishop Ives came to Upper Watauga, in the course of the summer, to consecrate Easter Chapel.

This proved to be the last of his official acts in North Carolina.*

Towards the close of September, '52, Bishop Ives applied to the Standing Committee of the Diocese, asking for an absence of six months, with an advance of $1,000 on his salary, to enable him to travel for the benefit of the impaired health of himself, and Mrs. Ives. The request was immediately granted. The necessary arrangements were made.

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*Easter Chapel alas! that was built on a Rock, with a perennial spring of water at the base, despite these auspicious symbols, and its fine outlook on the changeless Grandfather Mt., has long gone into decay and ruin! Its fate was hastened by a large branch broken off by the winds from an overhanging oak, which fell upon and crushed in, the chancel roof.

Bishop Ives sailed in October for Europe. On the 22nd of December he addressed a letter to the Convention of the *Protestant Episcopal Church in North Carolina*, resigning his office of Bishop of North Carolina, and declaring his intention to make his submission to the Church of Rome.

Thus sadly closed the connection of Bishop Ives with our Church, after an Episcopate of more than twenty years. This step, so afflicting to the Church at large, so especially afflicting to the Diocese, caused little surprise to those who knew Dr. Ives intimately, those who were aware of the peculiar mental infirmities from which he had been suffering for several years. Some few were indignant at the vacillation, and uncertainty of his course. A still smaller number suspected deliberate Jesuitism, and insincerity, a suspicion always arousing indignation in minds trained by a Branch of the Church Catholic especially distinguished for open frankness, and truthfulness, in word, and deed. But the majority of the wisest, and most experienced among the Clergy, and Laity, received the statement of Dr. Ives simply

in sorrow, and sadness; a sorrow blended with recollections of previous faithful services in the Diocese, and with compassion for the peculiar infirmities under which he had been recently suffering.*

Dr. Thomas Atkinson, Rector of Grace Church, Baltimore, was duly elected to fill the vacant Bishopric, the 28th of May, 1853.

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* Extract from Report of Committee, 1853.

"These two objects have been kept constantly in view by the Diocese of North Carolina. First, The preservation in full purity of the doctrines and practices of the Church—and, Secondly, The exercise of as great kindness and forbearance towards the late Bishop as was consistent with the first of these objects."

X.

THE effect of the apostasy of Dr. Ives to Rome was much less marked than might have been supposed. The Clergy of the Diocese remained firm in their allegiance to the Church in which they had been ordained. In the Watauga country, the attendance at the different Mission stations continued encouraging.

Mr. Skiles was now left alone on the old ground. He did not desert his post. Humbly, quietly, steadfastly, and with the fulness of loving charity, he devoted himself, exclusively, from this period to the spiritual welfare of the scattered flock in that mountain region. There were many difficulties to struggle with.

It had been supposed that the title to the property at Valle Crucis was vested in the Church. This was a mistaken impression.*

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* The following is Bishop Ives' account of his disposition of the property at Valle Crucis in a letter, dated, "Valle

The property, heavily encumbered with debt, was sold, both land and stock, by the representatives of Dr. Ives, to Mr. Robert Miller the grandson of a Church clergyman of the olden time, who now worked the former Mission ground as a farm. He was very kind to Mr. Skiles. The little office, or library, became the home of the Missionary who slept there, taking his meals, without charge, at Mr. Miller's. From the herd which had been so long under his care, the good Deacon reserved a favourite horse for Missionary work, and several pet cows ; and for these Mr. Miller also provided liberally. The Missionary took all the care of the horse on himself. Henry, a fine, spirited roan, was already a sort of brother Missionary, carrying his master faithfully, by day, and night, over many a rugged

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Crucis, Aug. 17, 1849." "Friends came forward and aided me to the amount of about $1,500. Upon this, I at once altered the Deed of Trust to the Church for the use of the Mission, so as to preclude my life estate in the property and only reserved to myself the management of the establishment during my natural life." He asserts, in the same letter, that he had spent on the property more than $5,000 of his own means.

The Deed of Trust mentioned above, was never made public.

path, on errands of duty, or charity. The cows were reserved for the benefit of poor parishioners. He lent them to different families, where there were sick ones, or young children, and in order not to tax his poor friends, and to make his cows more comfortable, he sent supplies of meal to the scattered cabins. But it was remarked that the cows often returned to Father Skiles, very thin, and looking much as if they had not had their full share of the meal. This troubled the good man greatly, for two reasons; he had a warm corner in his heart for every living creature, especially for what was under his care, and he was grieved to suspect the honesty of his parishioners in the log cabins. With a troubled face, he confided privately to a friend, that he did not know whether he could lend the cows, to this, or that, family again. The poor things had come back so thin! Nevertheless it is said that the cows were seen again trudging along the mountain paths to the same cabin doors; but it was surmised that private pastoral reprimands had secured the promise of a more liberal supply of meal to the poor creatures.

The Report of Mr. Skiles, for the year 1853 follows:

"Baptism, 1 adult. Confirmation 1. Communicants 20. Offerings at Communion, $9.75. I have assisted once a month in the Chapel at Valle Crucis. I have kept up a Sunday School, with the assistance of Mr. George N. Evans, consisting of a class of white children every Sunday morning, and of a class of coloured persons and children in the afternoons, until about Christmas. Since that time I have not been able to keep it regularly. I have taught a day school, nearly four months, gratis, for the children in the vicinity of Valle Crucis. I have held service once a month at a private house on Lower Watauga, and occasionally at Easter Chapel, on Upper Watauga. Also at Cranberry Forge once a month, for nine months. At Linnville about six months, and occasionally at Bottoms of Elk, or near there. There is manifestly an increased interest in the services of the Church, and many are inquiring for the good old paths."

The Report of Mr. Prout for the same year follows:

"Lenoir, the valley of the Yadkin, and Valle Crucis, are the stations which I have regularly visited. In the Chapel at Valle Crucis, I have preached, and administered the Holy Communion the first Sunday of each month in the year. St. Andrew's church, Lenoir, was consecrated last summer by Bishop Ives, to the worship of God, according to the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church. On the same Visitation

he also consecrated a Chapel near my residence, in Watauga County, by the title of Easter Chapel. Divine service has been held there by the Rev. Mr. Skiles, since my removal. I cannot say that our discouragements are few, or that our prospects are very cheering in this circuit of Missionary labour; yet the remarkable events of last year have unsettled none among us, nor disheartened us in an unusual degree. If the defection of Bishop Ives has sharpened the enmity of any towards the Church, and given a fertile occasion to those who were ready to wish what has actually happened, I hope it may also have increased the watchfulness, and humility, and patient courage of others. It is to be wished that an event of so much sadness may not be without indirect benefit, teaching as it does, a lesson of theological discretion. Baptisms 9. Confirmed 1. Communicants, 9."

Theological discretion! Great indeed is the need of that form of wisdom, in the present century of the Church Militant!

Two events affecting the work of Mr. Skiles had taken place during the year '53. The Rev. Mr. Prout had removed to Lenoir, where a much larger congregation were urgent for his services. But he still came with regularity to administer the Holy Communion every month, in the Chapel at Valle Crucis; and he never lost his interest in the Watauga Mission.

In the summer of '53 a fellow-labourer in

the good work came to assist Mr. Skiles, this was Mr. George W. Evans a layman from Lenoir. He was received very kindly by Mr. Miller, who gave him two rooms in his own house, a front room with a fireplace, and a bedroom adjoining, both comfortably furnished. A particular horse was placed at his disposal. For these conveniences and three bountiful meals daily, the charge was *three dollars a month!*

The schools kept by Mr. Skiles, both Sunday Schools and day schools, added greatly to his influence among the country people, and must have been of great benefit to the children. Schools were indeed one of the greatest needs of all that mountain region. His steady good sense, his singular gentleness, and patience, and his warm natural affection, fitted him remarkably well for teaching. He took a deep interest in his little flock, and they learned to love their kind master. They were very wild and ignorant, but none the less dear to him on that account. This teaching was simply a work of love, there was no payment. Much of his time was also given to visiting the sick.

There was many an isolated household in the Watauga country to whom William Skiles was not only pastor, but also physician, and occasionally nurse. His simple medical practice must have been successful, for it was sought for over a wide reach of hill, and dale, and he was generally considered a safe doctor in the ordinary diseases of that country. Although that mountain region was entirely free from the chills and fever of the low country, yet the people were very liable to inflammatory attacks, especially during the winter season, attacks often proceeding from carelessness alone. But, what is remarkable, typhoid fever, in a malignant form, occasionally appeared on the highest mountain ridges, where the air, always fresh and bracing, seemed the very elixir of life, and where the cool and brightly limpid waters filled the rocky basins in an unceasing, overflowing, current. There were however probably two causes for this visitation of typhoid fever. The door-yards of those mountain farms were almost invariably untidy; the cattle and pigs, and fowls were constantly gathered about the house door, and

the yard never thoroughly cleaned. It is also probable that many of the mountain springs, so bright and clear in appearance, may have contained decayed vegetable matter, unwholesome in character. Whatever may have been the causes these epidemics of typhoid fever occurred from time to time. At such seasons, some messenger from a log cabin, sent in haste, perchance a barefooted boy or girl, might frequently be seen at Mr. Skiles' office, asking for advice, for medicines, for religious consolation. The message would be scarcely spoken, and the subject clearly understood, before "Father Skiles" would make ready for his errand of mercy. Day, or night, often already weary, at times suffering from pain himself, he seemed instinctively to move towards the sick, his case of medicines in one pocket, his prayer-book in the other. At times the distance would be great, and "Henry" would be saddled for a tramp over some wild bridle-path in the mountains.

"Father Skiles" was also frequently called upon by the good people, far and near, for a Sunday service, perchance in a school-house,

perchance in a log cabin. He never refused a request of this kind, if possible to comply with it. After having made an appointment, he was very conscientious in keeping it, not unfrequently going many miles through rain, sleet, and snow for the purpose. The people liked his services. He generally preached plain, simple, short sermons, chiefly transcribed, and abridged for the purpose, from printed volumes recommended to him by experienced brethren among the clergy, or by the Bishop. The mountaineers liked these sermons. They considered him a good preacher.

His stipend at this time, as a Missionary was $100.

XI.

In the summer of '54 Bishop Atkinson came to Valle Crucis for the first time.

At this date, only a year or two after the Divinity School had been broken up, Valle Crucis had already a sadly ruinous aspect. One was reminded of a wreck, so far at least as regarded the appearance of the buildings. Put up hastily, of all sorts of materials strangely blended together, wood, brick, stone, adobe, all were now crumbling, and ruinous. The Chapel itself, warped, and twisted out of shape, was only held together by many heavy, unsightly props on either side—a novel kind of flying buttress. It was scarcely considered safe. Still monthly services were held there.

Bishop Atkinson, in his Address to the Convention, recorded his visit to the Valley:

"Sept. 30th: I visited Valle Crucis, in itself a most beautiful, and picturesque spot. * * * It is now the seat of a Mission where two faithful, and self-denying men are working

diligently for the temporal and spiritual welfare of a very destitute population. These are the Rev. Mr. Skiles, and Mr. George Evans. The Rev. Mr. Prout also officiates once a month, at the Chapel in the Valley.

"Oct. 1st, Sunday, in that Chapel, I preached, and confirmed six persons, and afterwards, assisted by Messrs. Prout and Skiles, administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper."

The warm interest of Bishop Atkinson in Mr. Skiles would appear to date from this first Visitation to the ground of his work.

As usual, the good Deacon was far from idle. To eke out his small stipend, at the request of his neighbours, he now opened a subscription school in the Office, or Library. Father Skiles, as he was frequently called now, in honour of his scanty half-gray locks, and venerable beard, always fond of children, knew well the simple loving arts by which their hearts are won. He always blended something of religious teaching, suitable to their age, with the lessons from spelling-book and reader. School hours over and the little ones dispersed, other labours succeeded. That small Office was seldom empty in the day-time, unless the Deacon was absent. The country people came

constantly to consult him. The Missionary was a sort of pluralist. He filled by unanimous public consent, several different offices for the common weal. A Minister of the Gospel, a schoolmaster, a sort of physician, he was also public scrivener, and legal adviser. Few days passed when some letter was not brought to him to *read* and to answer; family letters of all kinds, business letters, legal papers, with these his pen was often busy. There were then many men in those valleys, who could not write, or read writing, and among the women there were very few indeed who could even sign their own names. He was also general counseller to the neighbouring population. In perplexity, in troubles, they came to consult him, old and young, men and women. The grist-mill in the valley drew the mountaineers from their cabins to bring their grain for grinding. Some few, very few in fact, came in rude waggons, others on horseback, some on steers, many on foot. Most of them carried a gun, a backwoods' custom very common in that region, frequently a hound or two followed. The sack of grain was carried on the

shoulders, by those on foot. The men were, many of them, clad in home-spun tow shirts, and short trousers without coat or shoes, even in winter. They were rarely in a hurry, the movement of the country people of that region being, almost always, slow, and deliberate. They were strong, healthy, quiet and composed, frequently ruddy from exposure, and exercise. A number smoked corn-cob pipes. A woman riding a steer, with a child in her arms, and smoking a corn-cob, could frequently be seen at the door of Father Skiles' office, bringing the little one for medical advice. The men came for counsel on various matters. The variety of subjects on which the good man was consulted was really wonderful. With farming he was considered to know more than the mountaineers; in matters relating to stock, whether horses, cattle, or sheep, he was held to be an authority, and his opinion often decided a purchase, or a sale, or settled some small dispute. Frequently he acted as arbitrator between neighbours, his opinion being generally accepted as wise, and just. It was always a pleasure to him, when

he could act as peacemaker. And the opportunities for earning this blessing were not infrequent. He was often consulted on important matters of family life, the division of household goods, the disposal of children, a disturbance between husband and wife, or brothers and sisters. And all this work was done simply, and quietly, spontaneously, as it were. He was unconscious of his own value. He was one of the most humble of men. The sound good sense, the generous heart, the Lord had given him, acted instinctively, as it were, on each call of duty, whether trifling, or important. His influence throughout that mountain region was strongly felt. It was remarked that his room in the dilapidated Office was at times so crowded that it was "like a little Court."

There was yet life in the valley, although the different buildings, with one or two exceptions, had already fallen into a ruinous condition. There were the children of Father Skiles' school playing, and shouting about the Office. Across the valley, in the meadows beyond the little stream, labourers might be seen

laying up fodder for a herd of some fifty cattle. Near the buildings in the home field some twelve or fifteen sleek, straight-backed, broad-haunched, small-tailed calves were seen gambolling, and feeding. Night and morning a procession of twelve or fifteen sleek, glossy, Durham cows came home to be milked. Of the milk and butter from this fine herd, no account was taken; what was not eaten at table, or used for cooking, was left freely to the negroes. On the mountain was a large herd of fine Durhams, grazing at will. Every Saturday, Mr. Miller went up to the Alpine pasture to salt the herd; occasionally, for a holiday, Mr. Skiles, and Mr. Evans went with him. After reaching the wild open pasture, the usual call would be given, and in a moment the great creatures would come running, jumping, leaping, in their uncouth way, surrounding the visitors, their kindly faces, and large dark eyes all turned towards their friend the farmer. The Missionary was always pleased to see the herd, a number of the cattle having been under his care in previous years. He was of course thoroughly familiar with their clumsy gambols, at the

"salting." Strange that animals so finely formed in their own way, should be so awkward in their movements! How different from the wild creatures still haunting the woods on the same mountains, the graceful deer leaping over the fallen trunks, beneath the shadows of the primeval forest, within sight of the pastures where the cattle were playing their rude antics.

It was a regular habit with Mr. Miller to take gun, and hounds, with him to the "salting." A deer was almost invariably roused on returning, and the crack of the rifle, with the baying of the hounds, was often heard from the pastures where the herd was feeding. The cattle heeded these sounds very little, they were seldom alarmed by them, being familiar with the dogs. But occasionally when the chase led through the open ground about them, they would be thrown into wild terror, for a time. In one year, at this date, about '54, seven deer were killed within the limits of Valle Crucis. One day the children in the Missionary school heard the dogs in pursuit of a deer, and presently a noble heavily-antlered buck, of great size, was seen at bay in the mill-dam, only a

few rods from the school-room. It was soon shot. This buck had been so well fed that the depth of fat on its ribs was almost incredible. The flesh however, had so strong a taste from the bitter acorns on which it had been feeding, that it was uneatable.

There were great fishermen, as well as hunters in the valley. A brother of Mr. Miller was a very skilful angler. The finest of brook trout were on table almost every day, during the season. Occasionally he would go to particular points on the mountain streams, familiar to him, equipped with rod and flies, and return in the evening with perhaps fifty or sixty trout, some of them nearly a foot in length. Mr. Miller was something of a naturalist, rather too much so for the comfort of his friends. Among his pets was a live rattlesnake, a near neighbour of the Missionary. He kept it in a cage on the porch. On one occasion when Mr. Skiles and Mr. Evans were passing through the porch after supper, they heard Mr. Miller calling out in surprise: "Why, what are you doing here?" It was the rattlesnake with whom he was conversing. The creature

was crawling about at leisure, having crept through the slats of his cage, flattening himself to an incredible degree to accomplish the feat. Mr. Miller, not at all discomposed took the creature by the neck, with a pair of tongs, and with the other hand held the tail, rattles and all, and coolly replaced it in the cage. On another occasion he was seen riding past the Office, with a bag of trout at his side, and over one shoulder a pole, with a live rattlesnake attached to it. He had seen the snake, caught it, tied it with a strip of bark to a tree, until he had caught trout enough; and then fastened it to a pole, neck, body, and tail, and carrying the pole over one shoulder, rode quietly home with the deadly reptile at his back.

XII.

CHANGES in the property at Valle Crucis, with the increasing dilapidations of the buildings now led Mr. Skiles to seek a temporary home among different friends on the Watauga. For a time he lived with Mr. James Mast at Upper Watauga, in the house built by Mr. Prout, now removed to Lenoir. Here the Missionary taught a little school for a time, holding frequent services at Easter Chapel, while he visited other stations also. Wherever he moved his labours were always the same in character, an unceasing succession of quiet, loving, Christian service, for the good of all with whom he was thrown. And still Valle Crucis remained his head-quarters. He was enabled to retain possession of the Library, or Office, where he still kept his books, and medicines, and where he occasionally passed a week or two, in comparative solitude. His sole companion in the Library at this period

was a favourite cat. The good Missionary was very fond of this creature, making arrangements for its comfort during his absence, and leaving him in the dignified position of custodian of the Library, a position he is said to have held for a considerable period. Whenever the Missionary came into the neighbourhood on errands of mercy, he never failed to visit the cat, petting him and bringing him an especial treat of something nice; he also made arrangements with a family near at hand to provide him with milk from time to time. The books were always found in good condition; rats and mice had been kept at bay by the custodian. One luckless day a party of young men, with their guns, and hounds, crossing the valley for hunting, passed near the Library, and saw puss in the road. They set their dogs upon him, and hounded them on until they had worried the poor creature to death! An act of gratuitous cruelty this, which is said to have aroused in the good Deacon a stronger feeling of positive resentment than he was ever known to have shown before, in all his clerical life. He valued the

cat highly, and to have this useful, harmless, creature so cruelly tortured tried the Missionary severely. For some time he could not speak of the disgraceful incident without indignation.

Occasional services were still held in the Chapel, and Mr. Prout came regularly, once a month, to administer the Holy Communion, to the little flock gathering there. The Report of Mr. Skiles for the year '55 follows:

"I have held service at the following places: At Lower Watauga once a month, on Sunday; I have assisted the Rev. Mr. Prout five times at Valle Crucis, in the services, and in the administration of the Holy Communion; three times I have held service at Elk Cross-Roads; four times at Jefferson; twice on the Linnville; six times at Easter Chapel; seven times at Cranberry Forge; six times at a private house near Valle Crucis. Owing to the severity of the weather I was prevented from having a congregation for nearly two months, during January, and February. Baptisms 5. Confirmations 5. Communicants 17. Offerings $3.50."

Bishop Atkinson visited the Watauga country in '55.

"August 28th, at Valle Crucis, Mr. Skiles baptized an adult. I preached, confirmed five persons, and administered the Holy Communion, assisted by Mr. Prout."

Mr. Skiles was now living with Mr. Evans, at Lower Watauga. He gave up his schools at this date, and devoted his time entirely to religious duties at his many scattered, and widely distant stations, holding services, catechizing, baptizing, visiting and nursing the sick. Scarcely a log cabin in that region where the Missionary, and his horse "Henry" were not well known. The good people at the different stations were always friendly, and hospitable; they provided for himself, and his horse, but could make him no payment, beyond an occasional gift from some Christian woman of a pair of socks, or a cake of maple sugar. His stipend was now however, raised by the Diocese to $150. He was much respected by the country people, and the hearts of many in those rude isolated homes warmed towards him with kindly feeling in gratitude for his teaching the children, and his services among the sick. At Lower Watauga the religious interest, in connection with Mr. Skiles' labours, was increasing so decidedly that it was thought a small Church would soon be needed.

Bishop Atkinson came again to the Watauga country in '59:

"*August* 30*th*: I preached at a small meeting-house on the Lower Watauga. Here efforts are making to build a Church.

"*Sept.* 1*st*: I preached and confirmed one person at Boon (the county seat of Watauga), the first instance of that rite being administered, or indeed of a Bishop visiting that place

"*Sept.* 3*d*: I preached and confirmed two persons at Jefferson (the county seat of Ashe). In this place also, the rite was administered for the first time. In the evening I baptized a coloured child."

Bishop Atkinson became very much interested in Mr. Skiles, and his work; this interest increased with every Visitation. He generally invited the Deacon to accompany him on a circuit, more or less extended. On one occasion he took him to Asheville, and in a letter mentions the knowledge of the country shown by Mr. Skiles, with his admiration of the beautiful landscape, and his interest in the trees, and plants. The Bishop was much impressed with the personal character of his companion, so simple, and guileless, yet so strong and faithful in uprightness.

The Report of the Missionary for the same

year, shows the usual amount of steady persevering labour. It is contained in a few words; but the amount of fatigue, and exposure necessarily connected with his work, in a climate severe during the cold months, and over forest tracks often dangerous, can scarcely be understood by the reader unacquainted with that wild mountain region. In winter it is almost Alpine in character. He travelled over a belt of country some sixty miles in extent, though his usual course was more limited:

"Baptisms 9. Confirmations 3. Communicants 16. Offerings $2. I have held Divine service at Lower Watauga once a month; at Jefferson once a month; occasionally at Valle Crucis, Easter Chapel, Boon, Elk Cross-Roads, Cranberry Forge, and Linnville. I have filled all appointments except one Sunday. Once I officiated at Lenoir. I feel cause for encouragement from the increased interest manifested in the services, and larger attendance for some time past."

In '58 the Bishop came again to the Watauga country:

"*Aug.* 15*th*: Preached at Valle Crucis, confirmed four persons, and administered the Holy Communion.

"*Aug.* 21*st and* 22*nd* at Morganton preached four times,

baptized two infants, confirmed four persons, and administered the Holy Communion, Mr. Skiles assisting me in all the services."

The Report of Mr. Skiles for the same year, shows a large amount of work, in a wide field :

"I have performed Divine service at the following places, since the last Convention: Once a month at Lower Watauga ; once a month, excepting January, at Jefferson ; at Wilkesborough ; at St. James' Church, Lenoir, seven Sundays ; in the valley of the Yadkin once ; three Sundays at Grace Church, Morganton ; once on John's River ; one Sunday on New River ; near Morganton 4 Baptisms ; one Sunday on Linnville ; once at Asheville ; performed several services at Hendersonville ; occasional services at Easter Chapel, at school-house near Valle Crucis, Elk Cross-Roads, and twice at Valle Crucis. Baptisms 9 ; Confirmations 5 ; Communicants 23. Offerings, for Church Building Fund, $7.25."

Here are services held at sixteen different places, many of them widely distant from each other. He must have travelled more than 1,000 miles during the year. His services among the sick were frequent as ever. Mr. Evans remarks that on any application for a pastoral service, "he would saddle 'Henry' and ride over the mountains, ten, fifteen, or

even twenty miles, often in stormy weather, in order to pray with a sick person, or act as nurse." In case of severe illness he would at times remain several days in some distant log cabin. On these occasions "Henry" carried his master safely over dangerous roads, by day or night, being very sure-footed; he was a very spirited animal, capable of giving trouble to an ordinary rider, but it was remarked that he was always quiet with Father Skiles, never even attempting a caper with him. The Missionary took all the care of "Henry" himself, rubbing him down, feeding him, and attending to all his wants. The understanding between the kind owner and his horse was perfect.

Speaking of the character of Mr. Skiles, his friend, Mr. Evans, remarks: "He was kind to every one, and everything, especially what was under his care." "He was ever patient, kind, and gentle." "He was full of a constant, persistent, looking to duty, and living for duty."

Mr. Prout also, speaking of the good man's character remarks that "he was cheerful,

genial, patient. His manner commended him to the people. He had a cordiality, discretion, and suavity, rarely seen combined."

The heart of the Missionary was now full of the little Church, planned a year or two earlier. The Sunday attendance at Lower Watauga had become too large for any room in the settlement, and the first steps were taken for building. The position chosen for this little Church was very pleasing, on a high bank whose base was washed by the clear musical waters of the Watauga, while fine mountains, still clothed with broad reaches of the ancient forest, looked down upon the quiet spot. The scattered dwellings of the hamlet were seen here and there, on their small farms. The distance from Valle Crucis was about six miles, and the house of Mr. Evans, now the home of the Missionary, was about a mile distant, higher up the river. With the help of some architectural designs, and with the advice of more experienced friends, he was enabled to plan a pleasing building, simple but church-like in its whole character. The raising of the necessary funds was no light

task among a people so very poor. There was very little money in all that region. Many were the mites thrown into that rustic treasury by the women, mites earned by the sale of butter, honey, yarn, etc. The poorer men gave lumber and labour. A few families, more at ease, gave very generously. There was not one rich man in all the region watered by the Watauga. But there were men of generous hearts, and open hands, who gave freely to the building of the Lord's house. A few gifts of $10, or $20, and in one instance $50, were offered for the pious work. One good friend in the valley subscribed $50, and gave the logs needed, which he had drawn from his own land to the mill, and later the lumber was drawn by him to the building site. The Church was to be a wooden one, a frame of timber, with boarded sides. It was to be painted white. The work went on very slowly for awhile; gathering funds and materials was no easy task.

Meanwhile the pastoral work of the Missionary was carried on with the usual patient fidelity. In the summer of '59 Bishop Atkinson

again crossed the mountains to visit this humble flock.

"*August 25th* at Valle Crucis I preached, and administered the Holy Communion, and also confirmed five persons."

A few weeks after this Visitation the Missionary had the pleasure of breaking ground for the little Church, and laying the foundation. Mr. Skiles' Report for the same year contains the following items:

"Baptisms 11. Confirmations, 5. Communicants 24. Contributions: Education Fund $5; Church Building Society $12.80. Offerings at Communion $6. Total $23.80. I have performed Divine Service at the following places: Lower Watauga; Valle Crucis; Linnville; Easter Chapel; Elk Cross-Roads; Jefferson; New River; once at Pisgah; once near Elizabethtown in Tennessee; one Sunday in Statesville; one Sunday in Wilkesborough; two Sundays at Gwyn's Chapel. I commenced building a Church on Lower Watauga last fall, and hope, by the blessing of God, to complete it during the present year."

XIII.

THE pious wish of the good man was fulfilled. The work on the little Church went on slowly, but steadily, during the summer of '60, and every leisure hour of the Missionary was passed in superintending the details. The walls, of upright planks, battened, and painted white without, were neatly plastered within. The roof was open showing the timbers. As soon as the building was fairly enclosed, the services were held there. The entire cost of the Church was $700, of which more than one-third was given by the Missionary himself. It was his wish that St. John the Baptist should have windows of stained glass. The wish was gratified; the windows, simple, but pleasing, and appropriate in design, were sent by Mr. Sharp, the skilful artist in New York, at a reduced price, and Mr. Evans gave $40 towards the cost. Probably those coloured windows were the first brought over the rough roads of the

Blue Ridge, into the isolated valleys of that region.

The dark war-cloud of the period was slowly gathering over the country. Its shadows fell heavily on every Christian heart in the land. William Skiles loving, and peaceable by nature, felt these disturbances deeply. He now met with peculiar difficulties in performing his pastoral duties. The people of his scattered flock were divided in their opinions, some leaning in one direction, some in the other. Still, every Lord's Day, when the roads were at all passable, he mounted his horse "Henry," and rode out to keep some appointment. At most of the stations he still found a good attendance, but the hearts of the people were somewhat chilled, and more indifferent to religious subjects. During part of the winter the mountain roads were impassable from the floods, the streams were all swollen to torrents. Still he kept up monthly services at St. John the Baptist, and at Pisgah. In May he sent to the Convention the Report of his year's work:

"I have held Divine Service at the following places: At Lower Watauga; Elk Cross-Roads; Valle Crucis; Upper Wa-

tauga ; Cranberry Forge, and Richlands. I established a new Missionary station on the Linnville, where I have held monthly services, and with the aid of a few zealous members of the Church, there has been established a flourishing Sunday School. The attendance at the services of the Church have been generally good, such as to encourage me in the hope that the seed sown may yet bring forth a fruitful harvest. Since last Convention I have finished a small but neat and comfortable Church at Lower Watauga, which is now ready for Consecration, for which I feel very grateful. Baptisms 10 ; Confirmation 1 ; Communicants, 32."

Bishop Atkinson was prevented from visiting the Watauga Country in 1861. But in the summer of '62 he came into that region, and one object of his Visitation was to consecrate the little Church at Lower Watauga, which stood awaiting the solemn service, entirely finished, and free from debt.

The 22nd of August 1862 must have been a happy day for William Skiles. On that day the beautiful Consecration service was performed and he joined in the solemn prayers of dedication :

"Vouchsafe, O Lord, to be present with us, who are here gathered together with all humility and readiness of heart, to consecrate this place to the honour of Thy great Name ; sep-

arating it henceforth from all unhallowed, ordinary, and common uses; and dedicating it to Thy service, for reading Thy holy Word, for celebrating Thy holy Sacraments, for offering to Thy glorious Majesty the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, for blessing Thy people in Thy Name, and for the performance of all other holy offices: accept, O Lord, this service at our hands, and bless it with such success as may tend most to Thy glory, and the furtherance of our happiness both temporal and spiritual; through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour."

How heartily must the spirit of the good Deacon have entered into that prayer!

The Bishop preached an impressive sermon from the text: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

During the service a lame young man, anxious to be present, was brought in by his friends in a chair, and placed in the open space facing the chancel. The Bishop's eye fell upon him while preaching, and he alluded to the fact:

"People brought their sick friends to Christ, and He healed them. You have brought your friend here to-day in his chair, and we feel sure He is just as ready to bless that helpless one, and all now gathered in this place of worship, as He was then to bless those who needed healing, and forgiveness. The

blessing may be upon the soul now, but blessings to the soul, are even more precious than healing the body."

There was a crowd of the mountain folk attending the service, both within, and without the white walls of the church.

The solemn service over the Clergy left the little Church, and the next day went on their way to other appointments.

William Skiles never saw again the Church of St. John the Baptist. The holy desire of his heart had been granted; in poverty, and failing health, he had been enabled, by the blessing of God, to build the Church, to perform many services within its walls, and at length to take part in its Consecration. He left Watauga the day after the Consecration, with Bishop Atkinson, whom he accompanied to the house of Colonel Palmer in Mitchell County, where other duties awaited him.

XIV.

THE stormy tide of war was rolling nearer and nearer. Colonel Palmer had taken command of a regiment in the Confederate army, and was about to leave home. The ladies of his family were living at their solitary country house on the Linnville River. Unwilling to leave them entirely unprotected, he urged Mr. Skiles to remove to his house for the present, that his wife and nieces might have a respectable man to look to in case of danger from any roving band of bushwhackers that infested the country. Mr. Skiles rather shrunk at first from the responsibility, in his feeble condition of health, but eventually decided to go to Linnville. He left Watauga with Bishop Atkinson, and accompanied him to Colonel Palmer's house. The service of manly kindness he then assumed, became the last act of a faithful Christian life. He was not called upon to repel violence in any way; possibly the mere

knowledge that the Missionary was in the house may have prevented the approach of any unprincipled rovers. But he was at his post—and he died there.

His health became rapidly worse; he was soon too ill to hold service, or visit, and pray with the people, as usual. In the course of a short time he was entirely confined to his room. And his sufferings were severe. He knew the nature of his disease, an internal cancerous affection, brought on, it was said, by hardship, and exposure. The nearest physician lived at Morganton, thirty miles distant. Twice he was sent for, and came up into the mountains to prescribe for the sick man; but medicine could give little relief. Not a man or woman capable of nursing him could then be found in that region, which was very desolate, and dreary. But he, who had so long nursed the poor, in their log cabins, was not left uncared for. Mrs. Palmer devoted herself to the sad charge, remaining in his room much of the time, and doing all in her power to relieve his sufferings, which he bore with the most beautiful Christian patience and forti-

tude. He never complained, or murmured, and when the lady expressed her surprise at his remarkable patience, he replied he was only sorry for the trouble he gave her. It was a trial to Mrs. Palmer to feel that, in spite of all her efforts, she could not make him so comfortable as a stronger nurse might have done. But this feeling he never seemed to share; he was simply grateful for the kind care he received, grieved for the trouble he gave, and not for his own sufferings. "How can you be so patient, Mr. Skiles?" the lady said to him in constant surprise at his gentle endurance. "I am only sorry for the trouble I give you," was always his reply.

The months of October, and November, passed away. He grew more feeble, and helpless—at times too feeble to speak to his kind nurse. At length early in December he was peacefully released; passing away, as Mrs. Palmer said, "in such perfect submission, and such infant-like gentleness, as none could have conceived, who had not been present."

It was December 8th, 1862, that he died. His remains were decently laid out by one of the

nearest neighbours. Messengers, and letters were sent to the Bishop, and to the Rev. Mr. Wetmore, his warm personal friend. It was impossible to send to Morganton for a coffin. A rough box of boards was made on the spot by a neighbour. Mrs. Palmer herself put on his surplice, unwilling that a hireling should perform that service for him. His grave was dug in the garden, near the house, and here he was buried. But this was not to be his last resting-place.

Mr. Wetmore had been with him in September, and promised to visit him again. Early in December he left home to fulfil this promise, but on reaching the Watauga he learned that his friend was no longer living. He then turned up the stream, intending to cross the mountains to Colonel Palmer's. After riding only two miles he found the road almost impassable, from the height of the waters, and the ice on all the smaller streams. There were eighteen or twenty crossing-places, on the Linnville alone, and these were all frozen, and unsafe. Such was the rude track over which the faithful Missionary had so often passed to

keep his appointments. But "Henry" was sure-footed. Mr. Wetmore's horse came from the low country, and was not properly shod for crossing the ice. Mr. Wetmore returned down the stream to Mr. Henry Taylor's, on the Watauga, and the next day passed on to the house of Mr. Evans. On Sunday he held service at St. John the Baptist. Mr. Hardin was there from Cranberry Forge and he proposed that arrangements should be immediately made for removing the remains of their faithful Pastor, and bringing his body over to be interred in the Church-yard of St. John the Baptist. This pious duty was at once fulfilled.

The ice having melted Mr. Wetmore went over the Mountains on Monday to Colonel Palmer's house. The following day, December 16th, the remains were taken from the garden grave, placed in a waggon, and carried reverently to Mr. Hardin's house, where the faithful departed had so often held services. There they rested that night. The next day they were taken down to Watauga, to the house of Mr. Evans. There was a severe snow-storm in the mountains at the time. On Thursday,

the 18th, the little Church was opened for the regular funeral service. There was a small congregation, about forty, at that inclement season, but the hearts of all present were touched with a feeling of reverent, sincere, sorrow. Mr. Wetmore preached the funeral sermon.

The grave was dug in the snow, on the south side of the Church, beneath a white pine, a laurel, and an oak.

There, beneath the shadow of the little white church,* the pure waters of the Watauga singing a perpetual requiem, repose the remains of

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*[In the year 1882, the Church of St. John Baptist was removed in sections, to a spot higher up on the Watauga, and put together again, under the superintendence of Rev. Geo. Bell. This was done for the convenience of the Church neighbourhood.

During the present year, 1889, the Remains of Rev. Mr. Skiles, were removed, under Mr. Bell's charge, to the new site of St. John Baptist, and decently and reverently committed to their final resting-place, in a grave dug by the side of the Church he loved so well, amid a large assembly of people who had come together to do their old minister honour.

The tombstone of marble (which went from Asheville) bears the inscription :

WILLIAM W. SKILES,
Died Dec. 8 1862—*in peace.*
" Blessed are the Dead who die in the Lord."—*Rev.*]

the faithful servant of God. Loved by little children, the "Nestor" of his younger brethren of the Divinity School at Valle Crucis, revered by his scattered flock, sincerely respected by the older, and most influential Clergy of the Diocese, and honoured by his Bishop, the life of that humble man becomes a striking example of love to God, and love to his fellow-man.

Faithful, with a rare fidelity, over a few things, we know that his reward must be great in the joy of his Lord.

Extract from the address of Bishop Atkinson, to the Convention of North Carolina, delivered in St. John's Church, Fayetteville, May 15th, 1863:

"On the 22nd of August I consecrated the Church of St. John the Baptist in Watauga County, the Rev. Mr. Skiles reading prayers, and the sentence of Consecration, and I preaching the sermon. The Church, Gothic, and with windows of stained glass, would anywhere be a pleasing object, but in that sequestered, and picturesque spot, with the bright waters of the Watauga washing the foot of the hill on which it is built, and the high mountains standing as a guard around it, it is a touching, and appropriate memorial of that man of God, the Rev. Mr. Skiles, to whom its erection was so long

a darling object, and by whose unrelaxing efforts, this was at length accomplished. He was one whom all loved and honoured for his humility, his self-denial, his diligence, his affectionate temper towards his fellow-men, his unwearied zeal in the service of his Master. He was permitted to live until he saw the Church consecrated, and some of the living fruits of his self-denying labours gathered in. From that day he never saw it again. * * * He was a true Missionary, humble, patient, laborious, and affectionate, not despising the day of small things, and still less despising any human soul, however rude, sin-stained, and ignorant that soul might be. Long will the dwellers in the valleys and forests of that wild mountain region miss their faithful Pastor, who was at the same time their Physician, their counseller, and their familiar friend. It is a consolation to know that his last days were cheered by the respect, and affection, and Christian sympathy of the family of Colonel Palmer, whose house was a second home to him, his established residence being with his tried friend Mr. George N. Evans, of Watauga."

Resolutions at the same Convention offered by the Rev. Henry H. Prout:

"Among those whom the Church in North Carolina mourns, the Council desires to keep in remembrance the name, and character, of the Rev. W. W. Skiles. His residence in the Western part of the Diocese for nearly eighteen years, and faithful Missionary labours there, the Church refers to with peculiar satisfaction. He has been an illustration of the quiet,

discreet, persevering zeal which is most earnestly to be encouraged in her Ministers, and lay members. Therefore the Council Resolves,

"*First:* That the calling from us, by death, of the Rev. W. W. Skiles leaves to us the cheering memory of a very beautiful, genial, guileless character.

"*Secondly:* The Council remembers with thankfulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, his blameless zeal, his discreet earnestness, and his patient devotion to the work of Diocesan Missions in the mountains of the State.

"*Thirdly:* We gather from this and like instances of losses of Brethren by death, that our treasures are taken from us and placed on high, that there our hearts may be also.

"*Fourthly:* As a Council we implore the Lord of the Church to raise up faithful Missionaries to fill the now needy stations left vacant by the removal of those we love.

"Adopted, unanimously, May 16th, 1863."

Some thirteen years later, in May, 1876, Bishop Lyman, in his address to the Diocesan Convention, speaking of the Watauga country, remarked:

"I was touched by the affectionate mention made by so many in that region of the faithful labours of the Rev. W. W. Skiles, whose death some years since, has deprived the simple-hearted people of a Shepherd whom they deeply loved, and honoured."

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